

Side B by Moonlight0787

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Summary:

Murray's cousin Con visits Hawkins for a case, meeting up with Hopper.

1. 1

Side B

Turning down 'Eyes Without a Face', I pick up the phone and twirl the line, "Hello?" sitting down on the stool. "Whiskey echo India Romeo delta." Smiling from the nostalgia, "Murray, what do ya got?" The code I set up when I was 10, Murray had insisted I make some up when he went off to college, this code in particular made my blood rush. "Code!" He hissed, always so serious. Growing up Murray was the best salve for my ever curious mind; doing puzzles, reading about mysterious cases, learning new languages, coding...

A smile getting bigger at his enthusiasm, "Oscar November echo." This code was in fact the one I've been waiting for, snatching a Chupa Chup lollipop sticking it in my mouth as I look across the room meeting Herrins inquisitive chocolate eyes that match his rich complexion. Lime. Setting his copy of *A Study In Scarlet* down, he came closer. Murray continued, "Big fish are south of you, the fires gone, but I seen some sticks around." he informed me. South of me was Sesser, the town where he went to when it go too hot here in Aurora, his words not mine. And since then he just stayed, saying it was a perfect place to stay hidden, a small gleam in his eyes. So whatever happened is over, but there's still some activity. Understanding, I ran a hand through and down my wavy black hair, nodding and taking my Chup out motioning to Herrin to get a pad of paper and pen like a conductor. "Where's Dorothys home?" I asked him, Herrin's pen in hand waiting for my word. A dark chuckle, "I heard Notre dame had a hawk on it earlier." Hawk, hmmm. Covering the phone, "Indiana, hawk something." He wrote it down as I went back to Murray, "I leave for Saturn, when I do I'll drop by Mars." Telling him I'll see him Saturday. "Out." he let me know, "Bye." I replied and hung up the phone.

"So what we got?" Herrin asked me, I go over to my desk and pulled out a map, setting it up for us. Smoothing it out, I took my finger I began looking over Indiana, "Something with hawk in it." He came up besides me and started to look too, him seeing it first- goddamn, point- he said proudly, "Hawkins." Pulling out my lollipop, I rewrap it and put it down, "Yea." Going back to his chair, "Road trip Saturday?" When Murray left, its like the universe apologized and gave me

another best friend. I was an only child, so was Murray, but he was like my older brother. So Herrin was used to Murray's antics when he would come back to visit us from college. We would both stick to his hip, soaking up new information. Murray is actually what persuaded us to become the seekers of the unknown, investigators if you will, although me and Herrin only went to community college just for the basics on how to start our own business. Weird One was a national magazine we publish, it contains true stories about mysteries, paranormal, cryptozoology, weird science, disappearance, etc. Something for your mind. It was pretty popular here in the Midwest, and this is exactly what we needed after the incident at Indian Point Reactor Complex in New York. Which was a great story and sold a bunch of magazines, but we needed fresh blood and Murray always gave me a crumble when he found something interesting.

"Con?" Herrin breaking me out of my thoughts, "Yes, road trip Saturday, we'll have to reschedule with the Villisca house people." Pulling out his planner, he makes a note, "Will do." Herrin was my right hand, he was the more responsible and put together one. I was like a bomb, bless his patients. Yes I was chaos but I had an order to it. "And don't let me forget to roll some before we go." He let out a great laugh, "Like you would forget." I went back to packing up the map adding it to my day bag. "Alright, I'll see you at home." Our private joke, as we owed the apartment upstairs from our office. He just waved me off, going back to his reading waiting for the last package that was suppose to arrive today.

Unlocking the door, I put my day bag down on the entrance table, going to the fridge I grabbed some moscato and a pre-made sandwich. I went over to the book case and grabbed the Encyclopedia of the Midwest. Going down the hallway to my room, setting my wine glass down and throwing the book and sandwich on my bed, I step out of my jeans but stayed in my Billy Idol t-shirt. Sitting on my bed, I took a drink of my wine, and opened the book. Flipping until I saw the town, huh about 30,000 people, eating my sandwich I soaked up all the information the book gave me. Hawkins.

Saturday

"Slice Soda?" Herrins cheery voice asked. "Check." I put them in the road trip cooler. "Bologna cheese sandwiches?"

"With Cheetos," I loved putting them on my bologna sandwiches,

Herrin preferred plain potato chips, "And your chips as well." I told him after the look he gave me. "I hate how they turn my fingers orange." He mumbled, I hummed in agreement. We were almost done with our check list, "Joints?" he gave me a hopeful look, pulling them out of my day bag showing him the baggie, "Bam and bam, thanks for the reminder but you were right, I would never forget!" placing them carefully back in my day bag. Yes Herrin was orderly, doesn't mean he didn't like to smoke. "Here catch, I bought this the other day, thought it was perfect for the trip." He threw me a lighter, it had a picture of ufos on it "Rad." I stuffed it away too. Finally, closing the back of my black 1980 Gti Golf, I gave her a pat, Herrin gave me a look and shaking his head as he got in the passenger side. Sitting down to drive, "What, she's my baby."

"Baby almost got us stuck last winter in the middle of nowhere..."

I gave him a look, "And who the hell got the car out of the snow?" I poked his arm, he gave me a smile, "You." I shut my door and put my seat belt on. "Damn right me." I did a little flex, he ignored me and opened the map, "We just link up to 57 and take it almost the whole way down there right?" It had been sometime since the last and only time we visited Sesser, "Yep, checked it just to make sure last night." I pulled out of the drive way. We had our windows down, being early October it still felt nice out. We were both excited to see Murray again, he would usually let me know of cases and that was like this. Since this one was closer to me and him, I took it as a perfect opportunity to go see him. It seemed he was excited about this case as well, seeing as he was strict about the code.

About 30 minutes into our 5 hour drive, I grabbed a Chup out of my bag. Watermelon. Side eyeing me, "Those are going to rot your teeth." He told me for the millionth time, I waved him off. What could I say, he was probably right. The city gave way to the suburbs, then the small towns scattered about, then fields. They were starting to change to a golden brown color, it was relaxing to see the waves of grass and last of the crops. Music soothed us as we kept going on the highway, gummy bears may have been tossed, sandwiches and sodas ice-cold. Caffeinated songs were sung fast paced, stopping by questionable bathrooms, finding dollar bill on the ground. "Hey, see good luck!" When Herrin saw what I picked up.

Finally, around 4pm we showed up at Murrays particular residence. I remembered the camera and I gave him a little wave then some motions with my fingers. Nothing happened, the light bulb going off

over my head I motioned for Herrin to do his signs. After he did the door clicked open, "Hurry." Murray shoved us in and looked around outside behind us. He shut the door and locked all of his locks, bolting, and finally his cross bar. Giving him an amused smile, "Well hello cousin!" He just mumbled a "You can't be too safe." and went to his office desk, jumping right into it seems.

"So I got a friend in Hawkins that threw this story my way, he didn't know much, but he's seen some strange things. Nothing concrete mind you, but weird stuff has been happening for about a year in Hawkins, some people have went missing. He thinks it has died down, but just last week he still is getting calls about it." He smoothed out his papers, "What's it, exactly." I was too excited, I got so hyper when we got a new case to investigate, taking my Chup out of the wrapper. Murray looks at me and gives me a small shake of his head, "Childrens sweets still?" Herrin let out a small laugh, he bumped elbows with Murray. Defensively, "Hey, its better than my lungs hardening! Besides their good." I mumbled the last part.

Giving me one last look, and because he can't argue with me, he pointed to his map, "Around this forest is where the most is happening, by the national laboratory that was shut down all of a sudden several months ago." Curious. "Why'd they shut it down?" Herrin beat me to it. Running a hand through his balding hair, "My contact didn't know or say, he has theories though." Going through the information, seeing how to get there, Murray passed me a piece of paper, "Here, call him up when you get there."

Eagle: 812.550.XXXX

"The x's?" I asked, Murray shot a look at Herrin, then to me, "The year I broke my finger, plus Zaydes shoe size." Giving him a small laugh, Murray will truly never trust anyone besides me. Herrin thankfully is use to it, and waves it away, he knows Murray adores him. Looking at my watch, "If we leave now, we can get there at 10, take a look around..." Herrin gave me a look, "Seriously, more driving tonight?" Taking important papers from Murray, "I'm way too excited, come on Herrin possible cryptoids? You can't tell me your're not pumped right now." I threw away my empty Chup stick. He let's out a sigh, "You're right let's go." Knowing he hates driving or being driven in the dark, me on the other hand love it, I feel like i'm in a space ship. I promise him we'll get Wendys on the way, which won him over. Murray giving us hugs and warnings, "And don't forget to call me when you've made it there, and for goodness

sake, codes Con, codes!” He pressed, waving back at him while heading to my car, “Will do!”

We had the music turned down low, Herrin while eating his frosty and fries, “So it can walk on two feet but according to the witness descriptions, it can also run on all fours.” I hummed, thinking. “It also had a wide mouth, that also looks like a flower?” He gave me a look, shrugging, “Most cryptids look weird Herr. So it hasn’t been seen in several weeks, but Eagle now has some witness that are saying it’s back?” Herrin still going over the notes we got from Murray, “Correct, it seems like now they may be running on all fours though, more dog like? I donno Con what if its two different kinds of species?”

“That my friend is a great question.” Swipping some fries from him, “Plus you know what else we have to worry about.” a couple of seconds ticks by. “Yes?” He questioned me. I gave him a ‘duh’ look, “Bigfoot.” He laughed and put the notes away. “I guess, these woods are pretty big.” I nodded, agreeing. We were heading right into the woods, getting off a highway. These woods were big, we still had about 30 minutes until we got there. It was a typical back road, lights only once in a great while, passing cars a time or two. Nothing too exciting. Asking Herrin to pass me the thermos with coffee, I took a drink from it and gave it back, him taking a drink as well. “So Russians, Murray thinks they had something to do with the laboratory being shut down? What would they be doing here Con, we’re basically in the middle of no where.” He asked, I tapped the steering wheel, “Think about it, that would be perfect no would suspect it, plus fewer people but a town nearby for conveniences.” Nodding, “Good point.”

Feeling the coffee take effect, and the closer we got I was super awake. We slowly passed the Lab, the night was quiet and the half moon gave it an eerie glow. Herrin gave me a look, so I started going back up to speed, going to where the dot was on the map Murray drew. Technically Murray wanted me to wait to contact Eagle first then go, but I just wanted to look around. I couldn’t help the pull, we came up to a small clearing in the woods. Shutting off the car, I got my day bag out, grabbing the lighter and baggie. “Smoke first?” looking for cryptids at night in the woods while high, hell yes. It

calmed my nerves and helped me focus. Nodding Herrin put his head lamp on while I lit up. "You still got silver bullet?" He asked. I blew out, opened the glove box and showed him my silver Smith and Wesson .45 revolver. "Always." We've had a scary experience, and we thought it best to bring a gun, "Ain't getting me." I said to him, "Fucking a." Herrin looked at me, we both broke out laughing, handing him the joint, "But seriously gun safety." I tucked it into my jeans.

After smoking, we were prepared to go, head lamps ready. Getting out of the car I looked up to the sky, and let out a small gasp. The stars looked nothing like they did in the city, in the city they were muted. Here the stars sung brightly, you could see parts of the galaxy-space dust. We were entranced for a moment, both at the same time snapping out of it, remembering where we were and what we were doing, looking at each other, we laughed. "Alright, the area is just down this way about a fourth of a mile." I pointed towards the east. "Girl you got the gun, you're in the lead." He informed me. "Damn straight." I agreed. Herrin pulled out his camera to be ready just in case, I found a stick for spider webs or to shoo away critters if they try to get at our biscuits.

Looking around as we were walking, "Do you see any prints? Any sign of something other than a human?" I asked him, only to see something on a bush besides me, "Hold on, what's this?" I get closer, it was some type of purple/red slime. "Gross," Herrin said, "Lets get a sample." He got out his kit from his bag and grabbed a vial with a lid and a long q-tip. He collected a sample, put it in the vial, added some preserving liquid and bottled it up put it back into his kit." All of a sudden we hear something walking fast and a "Police! Whose there?" Eyes growing big, we turned our headlamps out, I whispered, "Shit I still got the pot on me too, lets break up and meet back at the car, you think you can do that without getting lost?" Nodding, "I'll have to!" Foot steps and light getting closer, "Hey I know you're there!" We sprang into action and I heard the man curse, I went south and Herrin went north. I was trying to run and get use to the darkness, so I didn't kill myself in the process. I tried using more springing steps, so I would be quieter. Breathing hard and I wasn't sure if he chose to follow me or Herrin but I wasn't stopping to find out. My leg hitting a bush branch, "Shit" I cursed but still ran. After minutes of running my chest was starting to hurt, I had to at least slow down. Trying to catch my breath, I put my hands on my knees and listened. I couldn't

hear anything besides the normal night sounds. My blood was pumping so fast right now, a natural high. After listening for a good minute, there was a deer trail to the right of me heading back the way towards the car if I was lucky, I'm sure I could manage. Then suddenly, blinding light, and a "Hey!" I let out a scream, I seen a mans face, I yelled, "Big foot!" Proceeded to run left, and everything went black.

Notes for the Chapter:

Hello, welcome to my first fan fic on this site, I'm still working out the kinks. I haven't written in a long time, it's just my hobby. No beta, all mistakes are mine! Also I'm pretty sure this is not how codes work :p

2. 2

Sunday

First thing waking up from total blackness is light and warmth on my eyelids and voices talking low, I keep my eyes closed taking stock and trying to remember. There was a pain in my leg, but I moved my head just a fraction and pain shot straight to the middle of my forehead, I moaned out a, “Shiiiiit.” I hear a shuffling, “Yea shit, you ran right into a branch.” I reluctantly opened my eyes slowly trying to push through the blurriness. My hazel eye meeting tired deep blue eyes, his eyebrows pushed together harshly, but his eye were soft despite his distress. He had a diamond nose that fit his face, a brown mustache with a 5-o’clock that matched his full head of hair, looking as if it been combed back several times with a hand. His lip were pursed in a line, slightly frowning. Feeling some heat come to my cheeks, I whispered, “Shit.” While staring, his eyebrows twitched into a questioning look before switching to as if he remembered something, “And Bigfoot, really?” He stood up straight crossing his flannel covered arms giving me a narrowed eyed look.

Laughing slightly as I remembered, the pain again zapped to my forehead, I squeezed my eyes shut and brought my hand up to my head, moaning slightly. Hearing him curse, “I knew we should have gone to the ER Herrin.” His deep voice said almost accusingly, also crap I forgot about Herrin, looking over to his voice. “I’ve told you she wouldn’t have wanted to.”

“Yea and why was that again?” He looked like he was almost out of patience. “Zombie apocalypse.” He told the man confidently. He let out a puff of air, “Zombie...” But I interrupted him, “Zombie apocalypse.” I confirmed holding my forehead. I heard movement, “Ok look, you’re going to take these pain pills at least, then your going to explain zombie apocalypse...please.” I sat up on the couch, shutting my eyes again, “Why should I trust you with pills, I don’t even know you.” I reasoned. Herrin besides me said, “He’s Chief of police.” Rubbing my head, “Again why should I trust you?” The man let out a quick laugh, “I also happen to be Eagle.” His voice getting closer, I open my eyes and looked up to take the pills and water, looking towards them and back to his tallness, “Bigfoot.” I mumbled and took what was offered. His cheeks had the slightest pink come to

them, you could barely see it...but I did. "We can't all be what...5'3, 30 year old?" He guessed, and he was good, but, "5'4 and 34!" I defended myself.

I took the pills and drank the whole cup of water, squinting to Herrin, "Day bag?" I asked him, he went over to the front door and brought it too me, I thanked him opening up and grabbing a fresh Chup and plopped it in my mouth, going back to holding my head. Grape. "And thats another things, why lollipops..." I waved my hand to stop him, I couldn't think my head hurt too much. Herrin being the best friend in the world, knowing exactly what to say, "I would give her a couple of minutes for the pills to kick in." He came over and patted my back. I hear Eagle hum in agreement, thankfully. I hear them breathing softly, and a clock ticking behind me. I try and even my breathing out, slowly going back in. I focus on the pain and my try and smooth it, concentrating on the grape flavor. After doing this for 15 minutes, I feel the sweet release of the pills kicking in. The pain starts to receded from my head, then my leg, shaping into a much more manageable shape.

Finally, opening my eyes and pulling out my Chup, I looked at the guys, "Con." I nodded to Eagle, he looked confused. Herrin helped him out, "Connie." He correctted, I frowned at him, "But I go by Con because Connie just sounds...whiny." I winced. Herrin laughed, "Ok Alfred." That shut him up quickly, he doesn't like his first name because he thinks it makes him seem like a grandpa. Hearing a small laugh, I looked back at Eagle, "Hopper, Jim Hopper." He held out his hand, I gave him a quick but strong handshake. His hands were incredibly warm, rough, but not cutting rough. Sitting back into the couch I brush my hair out of my face then rewrap the lollipop, putting it back into my bag. "So." Hopper nodded his head at my bag, motioning to the candy. Right, "I used to smoke like a chimney until Murray found out, not that he's happy about what I took up in place. All my teeth are going to rot according to him." I flashed him a toothy smile. He just hummed, looking towards his side table. I saw a pack that was half full and an ash tray, knowing where this was going. "Oh don't worry I'm not judging you and it's fine to smoke around me, I'm good with my Chupa Chups." I pat my bag. Remembering, "By the way you went through my stuff?" I asked. He didn't even look sorry or embarrassed, "There I was about to end shift, I notice two people in a car creeping along the Hawkins Laboratory, not going towards town but away into the very woods

where weird shit's going down, late at night. I come up on an empty car, with the whole clearing smelling of pot." He gave me a look, I stared right back at him, not apologizing. He went on, "Then when I try and question you, you both split and ran. Then when I finally snuck up on you, you freak out." I wince, it was true. "So yes I carried you back to my blazer and checked out your bag." That brought some heat back to my cheek visioning him carrying me. Looking down and clearing my throat, "And you took my weed?" I didn't find it in my bag.

He gave me a hard look, with the tiniest mirth in his eyes, "I am the Chief of police." He explained to me, right that bump. Nodding to him in agreement, he asked, "Now, zombie apocalypse?" Sighing because I feel slightly embarrassed to try and explain my silliness to this serious man that had a sense of charm to him. "If there were ever a zombie apocalypse there would be no hospitals, no pills. So every time I get hurt I try not to resort to going to the doctors, or taking pills, so I'll be ready." It's sounded so lame to me suddenly. Clock ticking, finally, "Well that's actually not a bad idea," He seemed confused to his own self, Herrin let out a small laugh, "But head wounds are different." He gave me a look. Agreeing, "I know, and I would go to the ER if I had vision problems or anything like that." I saw him wince slightly, nodding towards me, "It left one hell of a mark." I reach for my forehead, my turn to wince. Standing up looking around, Hopper did the same thing and motioned to my right, "Bathroom." He said. I gave him a small nod in thanks and went in.

I did my business, noticing my leg wound was already wrapped neatly under my jeans on my calf. I carefully un did the wrappings and peaked under the cotton pad, a gnarly gash, but nothing too bad. I rewrapped it thinking to myself how it's going to make a cool scar. Finishing up, I went to go wash my hands and look in the mirror. Yuck, my forehead looked terrible, bruised imprints from the bark were showing, it was red and looked angry. I heard both the men talking quietly as I reached for to wipe my hands dry. Giving one last wincing look in the mirror, I went to go join them.

Hopper was passing something to Herrin, "Here's some Arnica cream, for your forehead." He passed it to Herrin, which in turned just

passed it to me. "Thank you." I took a small size drop while sitting back down on the couch. Rubbing it carefully on my poor abused forehead I ask, "So how do you know Murray?" Hopper was pulling ingredients out of the fridge, Herrin was sitting at the table reading a newspaper, but still listening in. "He interviewed me one time, and we kind of clicked" He shrugged. He put ham in the skillet, and cracked some eggs in a bowl. I got up, " I can make the coffee." I nodded towards the percolator. Hopper gave me a small smile, "Sure, thanks." I made the coffee while Hopper talked about Murray, Herrin popping into the conversation once in a while. Hopper offered me the last seat at the table, and he stood and ate. "I hadn't talk to Murray in a while, but when people have been coming forward about weird creatures I knew to give him a call, it sounded right up his alley." He put his dish in the sink and reached down for his papertowel that fell, I may have or not took a peek at his butt. Quickly looking the other way, I caught Herrins knowing eyes, finally resting my eyes on the deer head that's on the wall, remembering something, "Hey! By the way where's my gun?" I stared at Hopper accusingly. "Oh that cannon," He pulled it out of a case on the wall and sat it down on the table, "Going to break your wrist, you know how to use it?" He mocked me, "Excuse me?" What the hell...

"By the way you have paperwork on that?" He raised his eyebrows. Huffing I went over to my day bag and tore it open, getting out my wallet I pulled out my gun safety card, gun receipt , concealment card slapped them down on the table by my gun. I looked to Herrin, he was clearly amused. Huffing again, I was on a mission. Grabbing Silver Bullet, I marched to the door while I heard Hopper say, "What the hell?" as he started to move. I went out the door and was looking for it, almost all men, especially in small towns, set up for gun practice. I went off the porch and looked right, nope. I went left hearing both men following me, I heard Herrin, "Con." Like he was warning me but clearly knew, I waved him off while looking for it. Finally, around the cabin sure enough was several bottles and cans standing up.

Opening the revolver to make sure it still had bullets in, good. I spun it closed and looked at my targets. Breathing in, lifting the gun I took stance. The afternoon wind was soft, trees slowly moving. The men stood right by me watching in interest, I went right in. Pop, a bottle. Pop, a can. Pop, can can. I look over quickly and see Hoppers amused face, his lips set in a smirk, but something in his blue eyes. Pop-nick,

nothing. I looked, "Shit." I cursed under my breath, embarrassed. I'm better than this dammit. I hear a low whistle, "Guess I was wrong, we got a natural Annie Oakley." Herrin agreed, "Though usually she never misses." I gave him a quick look, I could feel the blush, Hopper helping me out, "I was just kidding about the paperwork, I seen it when I went through your bag." He told me matter of fact. I gave a small groan, "Of course you did." My face aflame. He elbowed my arm, "Seriously you're a good shot." I gave him a smile, "Thanks, Murray insisted I knew how, my dad not so much. So he taught me in secret until my dad found out. I showed him I knew how and all the safety. He insisted I go to class and get proper paperwork. We had a incident a couple years back," I nodded to Herrin, "So I got my Silver Bullet just in case." I moved to go pick up the glass and cans, Hopper went with me.

"What happened?" I put the safety on and tucked it into my waist band, reaching for a can. "We were on a case similar to this one actually. I'm guessing Murray filled you in about who I am and what I do, correct?" I actually didn't know if Hopper knew anything about me. "Yea he's mentioned you a time or two." Good. I threw some glass in the crate Hopper pointed out to me, Herrin put a can back up on the fence. "Well it had to do with a cryptid as well, small town like this too." Realizing the similarities it gave me a shiver, Herrin and I am give each other a quick look. "A Reverend asked us to come to town and investigate what he called a wolf like creature, one that would only come out if the moon was full." I look to see Hoppers reaction, he was wincing his eyes as if cautious, "A Werewolf?" He asked unconvinced. Use to this reaction, "I know but believe me, if Herrin wasn't wearing his silver ring that day. It was so close to my face." I remembered the snapping teeth, and the hot breath on my face. I explained how it cornered me and Herrin came out of left field and punched the shit out of the monster in the face. It howled in pain holding its face, smoke rising out of the wound, growling it ran away. After that incident we weren't so jaded thinking we were invincible, and started to get serious about the work we do, minus the occasionally getting high while investigating but he didn't need to know about that. "Holy shit you punched a werewolf and lived!" Hopper gave Herrins upper arm a punch. Herrin blushed and rubbed the back of his head, shy when it came to attention.

I looked at Hopper, "Wait you believe us?" Now that was a first. At the time, we didn't have our magazine yet, and was still trying to

fund it. Trying to sell the story and photo evidence to the major news network in Chicago. Ok so the photos weren't the best, you try running from a werewolf and taking it's portrait at the same time! Growing serious, "The things I keep hearing from good reputable people lately, I believe in something. This isn't just a prank, or some asshole drunk guy. People have gone missing. Our town is usually pretty quiet, at least it used to be." He went quiet, thinking. The wind picking up, Hopper went back on the porch opening the door for us, we went back inside the cabin.

"Oh shit, Herrin did you call Murray?" Remembering his warning to call him when we got here, "Yea I did when we got to the cabin, I knew he wouldn't mind how late it was." Good, I didn't want him to worry. We spent the rest of the afternoon going over what's going on in Hawkins, eating a simple lunch, "There's this girl named Barb, 17. Disappeared at a party, just out of no where, no one seen anything amiss, she was there then just, gone. I've seen some weird stuff over the years being a cop, but I've never seen this, there's usually some type of clue." His eyes hard, jaw set staring off. Shifting in my seat, "And the other missing person?"

"Suzie, 13. She was supposed to go to camp this past summer, she walked to the bus stop, but never got on. Only a two block walk, no one seen anything." He picked up his pack of cigarettes, taking one and lighting it. Herrin questioned, "And you don't think it could be a serial killer?" My leg started to bounce. "Someone would have seen or heard something, things aren't adding up, and the laboratory activity wasn't helping. There were Russians visiting the lab at one time, which I wouldn't mind but the men were carrying a small arsenal." I grabbed a Chup. Blackberry. Hopper put his cigarette out, "You guys are welcome to stay the night, you want to come into town with me and get a pizza and beer?" He asked Herrin, "Sure." He said, "Hey get me a bottle of wine please, Herrin you know what kind!" I was going over the notes Hopper had. "Will do." The screen door shut. "Hey." Hopper called, I look up, "Yes?" After a beat, his head jerked towards me, "The door, lock it. Please." Eyebrows going up, I crossed the room, "Right." I shut the door, locked it and gave him a small wave through the glass, he gave me a small smile. Another beat. Turning around, walking towards his Blazer he added over his

shoulder, "Be back soon." Damn he looked good in flannel...

After 20 minutes, I decided to take a break and look around. Not snooping, looking. Seeing the radio on his kitchen counter, a stuffed fish on the wall, pictures of family. I looked at the cabinet Hop pulled Silver Bullet out. Noticing it had a key hole, I try to open it just in case it wasn't locked. Smiling wide, score! I grabbed my baggie and stuffed it back into my bag, hiding it under some stuff. Putting Silver Bullet down on the table, I get my keys needing to get more bullets to refill my gun, the bullets where in a lock box in my car. I look out the door window, the sun was almost down, the colors growing darker through the tops of the trees. Unlocking the door I open it and walked out to the porch, listening. Normal sounds of the woods were playing out; crickets, scurrying, raccoon chitters. It was still windy, not too bad though. I stepped down the stairs and headed over to my car, trusting the porch light. I opened the back of my car, finding the lock box unlocking it. I pulled out the bullet box, getting 5 bullets. A terrifying cackling scream let out close to my right, my heart slammed into my throat, ice going through my blood. I dropped the bullets and ran for the cabin, "Fuck." I tear the door open, close it, locking. I grabbed Silver, taking the safety off I look through the window. My breathing was labored, expecting a monster to appear.

Slowly after several minutes of nothing appearing, I slink down and sit against the back of the couch, waiting. When I hear a vehicle coming up the drive, I rest my shoulders knowing they were close, coming down from being so afraid. They must have seen the bullets, I hear Herrin call my name, as Hopper pounded on the door, I got up to unlock it. "What's wrong?" He questioned me as they both came in. You could see he was tense, gun in hand ready for action, Herrin was looking around. "There was this scream..." I explained to them what happened, my chest still tight. Hopper lowered his gun after I explained, let out a breath and laughed loudly. I looked at him like he was crazy, and slightly offended, "What?" I snapped.

He put his hands up in surrender, "I'm sorry it's just it was a mountain lion, their calls are horrible." I frowned, sonofabitch. He ran a hand through his hair, "They don't normally attack people either so you were probably fine." Hopper explained. I crossed my arms, heat coming to my cheeks, "Well I didn't know..." I trailed off. I looked over to where Herrin sat the pizza and drinks down. I felt his hand touch my shoulder and rub his thumb over it, "It's fine," He walked away towards the pizza, "In fact with all the stuff happening,

I'm glad that's all it was." He grabbed a beer giving it too Herrin, passing me the wine and a glass, he looked in my eyes, "I'm sorry it scared you though." He looked sincere. I took the stuff out of his hands, he went to go get plates for the pizza, I mumbled a thanks.

We ate, had some drinks and played poker, which I was horrible at, Herrin kicked ass though. Getting late, we would go do interviews tomorrow while Hopper was at work, he already got the witnesses' approval we could question them. Which brings us now to this moment, stupid debate. "You're not sleeping on the couch again, you can sleep in my bed, I'll take the couch." Hopper said, crossed arms thinking that that was final. I peeked around him, seeing through his open door to his double bed, then back to him looking at him from toe to head, stopping at his eyes.. Aha! The same small flush came to his cheeks. "No dude, the couch is the perfect size for me, plus you would never fit and sleep soundly." I wrapped the blanket around me and plopped down on the couch, Herrin camped out on the recliner chair halfway asleep already. "But..." Hop tried but I interrupted him, "Seriously what is it with guys and thinking they have to take the couch, I'll survive" I close my eye, wiggling to get comfortable, "Plus your body would never fit, and I don't want to put up with someone whose had no sleep," I find the perfect spot when I heard him move closer, "Your couch is soft." I ended quietly. I felt heat near me, I didn't open my eyes. "Goodnight." He said softly above me and walked away to his door shutting it. Goddamn, my blood rushed.

Notes for the Chapter:

Couches are comfy damnit!

3. 3

Monday

Even though he was trying to be quiet, I woke up to Hopper going into the bathroom turning on the shower. I rubbed the sleep out of my eyes, looking to my watch- the small lamp above the table on the wall was my only light. 6:30 am. I sat up and yawned stretching, I looked over to the chair, Herrin was still asleep. It was so quiet except for the water running. I got up and started to make coffee, scooping it out of its tin, adding the water and putting the percolator on. I put slices of left over pizza in the oven to reheat, one for Herrin when he woke up. Seeing the coffee done, I poured half of it into my thermos and half into Hoppers, making sure not to burn myself. As I was getting the pizza from the oven I heard my name said in surprise, I put the pan on the oven looking over. Hopper was standing with a towel around his waist, he was using another to dry his hair, I swallowed. "Hope I didn't wake you, oh coffee, thanks." He nodded to his thermos. Clearing my throat, "Your welcome, I reheated some pizza if you want it." I chewed the inside of my cheek getting it on a plate for him, "Sounds good, let me get dressed." He said off handily as he shut his door, as if you weren't having an awakening. His chest was broad on the muscular side, not over-bearing though. You could see the bare outlines of abs, softness in the middle. His arms where almost the size of your thigh, forearms strong. Pronounced calves, feet proportionate. Basically a hot ass dad bod- sonofabitch. I'm 34, I've had relationships, although none lasting over a year, nothing special. I've been with guys, have had good times, but goddamn if all 6'3 of him wasn't pure intoxicating to me. Jesus Christ I sounded like a freaking teenager, I chide myself as I leaned against the counter, chewing the slice.

He came out of his room dressed in his fucking uniform masking his goddamn beautiful body, I glared at it. He didn't seem to notice as he poured a cup of coffee for himself and grabbed his pizza, "Thanks." He said trying to keep quiet. "No problem." He again made sure I had the address I needed, and the map of Hawkins he gave me last night. I followed him to the door as he put his hat on, I let out a small laugh. "What?" I tugged his hat a bit, "Have fun being the man." I joked. He looked down to me, giving me a crooked smile, "Will do."

Hopper went out down the stairs, "By the way," He called out, "There's a reason I didn't lock that cabinet." I laughed out loud, caught. "You know for a cop, you're not so bad." I closed the screen door as he reached his blazer and looked up to me, "Gee thanks." He gave me a wink. Eyes opening a fraction more, I closed the door to lock it and waved at him. I was NOT blushing...

Getting clothes from my car, I went and took a shower as well. When I got out I reapplied my bandage on my calf, still stinging a bit and reapplied some ointment to my head- which was now purple instead of red, great. I grab some concealer and try to even it out as much as possible so it wasn't so apparent. I put my outfit on for today, something a bit more professional than my band t-shirts. I pulled on a sage green sweater, the sleeve were puffed a bit. Next were my size 12 un-ripped jeans, along with my black and white converse shoes. I brushed my wavy hair up into a messy bun, and applied some lip balm. Coming out Herrin was eating his pizza. "Hey." I grabbed my coffee cup, drinking it. Herrin nodded his hello, "I got off the phone with Terry." I noticed him look away for a split-second before looking back at me, "He said the new issue is ready to go this Friday, I double-checked and everything is covered." He confirmed. Terry was our newest hire, Herrin never had a chance when he met him on his first day two months ago. Terry was a 6ft, 29 year old, if I had to guess an 8 pack-model worthy looking man, total dork but we love him. I hired him, because he had an impressive science back ground, not for eye candy- I liked to tease Herrin. Herrin is in some ways like me, in certain areas in life we were like turtles coming out of our shells. After a couple of weeks working with us, Terry asked Herrin out, much to his surprise. They've been together since, everything was new, so Herrin was going slow.

"Awesome, we should drop off the sample at the post office for him when we go into town, how is he?" Getting my day bag in order, snatching my morning Chup. "Great," Herrin smiled brightly, "Misses me." Cherry. I rolled my eyes, "You've only been gone for three days, I swear you guys been joined at the hip since he started working with us." I was happy for him, but I couldn't help poke a little fun his way. "What can I say? He's great." He gave me a big smile and drank his coffee. "Well glad to know he didn't wither away, with you gone and all." I asked smirked, putting Silver Bullet back in the cabinet, as of right now we didn't have any plans going back to the woods today, I think we'll be ok without it. He went and took a shower after that, I

got stuff in order waiting for him. Getting in the car 10 minutes later, we were off to a witnesses house, Karen Wheeler.

We pulled up to a big house, brick on the first floor and white siding on the second. The lawn was perfectly manicured, yellow, orange and deep red Mums that looked like they were just planted by the door. A Typical Midwestern suburban house. We got out, heading towards the door, before we got halfway, a lanky teenage boy came barreling out the same time I heard, "Be back by 6 after school!" Assuming it was Karen. The boy said, "I know mom!" He picked up his bike, didn't even notice us, seemed like he was on a mission. As the lady was about to shut the door, she noticed us. "Oh hello, you must be people Jim told me about." She went to go shake our hands as we introduced ourselves, "Herrin." She nodded, "Con..nie" I said at last thought- professional. She gave us a perfect smile, "Nice to meet both of you, won't you come in."

We all sat down in the living room on pristine pastel pink couches, declining the coffee she offered but took a glass of water. "So Mrs. Wheeler..." I started, "Please, Karen is fine." She told me. "Karen, could you start out explaining what you seen?" I asked her, Herrin set up his recorder, "You don't mind do you?" He asked her, "Oh that's fine." She reassured. She explained when she first seen the creature, it was in the early evening several weeks ago; she was coming home from dropping her son Mike at his friends house for a sleep over. "It was by the road, I almost hit it. At first, it was running on two feet, but then dropped down to four." I took out the map of Hawkins, "Could you point on the map where you first saw it?" She pointed to an area right at the edge of town. "And it wasn't a bear?" Herrin asked trying to eliminate other possibilities. Karen let out a shiver, "Goodness no, it was no bear." She went on to explain how the body looked, "And it's mouth, it was grotesque. It opened up, kind of like a flower, teeth everywhere." She unfolded a piece of paper, "I'm no artist, but here." She showed us. It's weird looking for sure, the picture helped finish the image I had in mind. I gave Herrin a look, a werewolf was one thing, but this... This was intense looking, something you would find on the cover of a D&d book.

"Right, and you've seen it again?" I asked my knee started to bounce, I gave it a small shake to stop it. "Yes, I was walking with my girl friends around the block, and I dropped my water bottle, it rolled towards the woods, I went to go retrieve it and when I looked up and

I seen a creature which was similar, but it was on all fours, more dog like.” She explained. We spent about 20 more minutes going over what she saw, finishing up she showed us to the door. “And like I promised Jim, I won’t let anyone know we talked.” she said quietly. What the hell...? “Hopper doesn’t want anyone to know?” I questioned. “Well he probably thought you know, him being Chief and hasn’t solved it yet, a woman coming in and trying to solve it.” She shrugged her shoulders. What the hell! I smiled tightly, “Right, so I take it you want me to censor your name in the magazine.” Nodding, “I think that would be best, don’t want people thinking I’m crazy.” She laughed tightly. I’m not only disappointed but I’m angry, it’s so hard for women in my line of work especially my niche. How dare Jim think that, and how can Mrs. Wheeler think that that’s ok, or using the word crazy when she herself seen it. It’s real, there’s so much unexplained realness out there. It’s not crazy, it’s tangible if you notice it. We get in the car, and drive towards the post office.

Herrin was quiet, he knew I was upset, and he usually lets me come down before we talk. I park into the lot, turning off the car. I look over and see the police office and Jim’s vehicle there, tapping my foot “why don’t you go ahead and drop the package off, I’ll meet you back here at the car.” His body stilled before getting out, “You sure that’s a good idea?” Nodding, I waved him off. I got out and crossed the street, careful of the traffic. I open the door and was greeted by an older lady, the name on her desk said Florence. “Good morning, I’m Florence, how may I help you?” She asked with a smile. “May I see the Chief please?” Florence was about to call him on the phone when I heard a voice, “Anything I could help you with?” Asked another officer, looking at my forehead. He was tall, had a hat and black horned glasses. I’m trying to be nice to the people that didn’t deserve my wrath, “No, thank you. I’m here to see the Chief.” I told him. He gave me a once over, tipped his head to Florence, and told me to follow him. He opened up the counter top, and motioned for the door marked:

Police Chief

Jim K. Hopper

I gave it a small glare. I knocked, I heard a shuffling of papers and heard a gruff, “Enter.” I opened it up, there was a cloud of smoke. “Con.” He said surprised, “Here, shit let me open up a window.” He

waved some smoke out of it. I closed the door and stood with my hands over my chest. He looked back at me and went still, "What?" He asked. Getting to the point, "Why don't you want Karen to tell anyone else about us? You know it could really help the case." I started to pace, "I know I'm just a woman, but I have a real job, a real magazine, real experience." He held up his hands, "Woah I know that..." I cut him off, "I've seen things Jim, things that you haven't experienced, and now your threatened because of what? You want to be the hero? A woman can't solve anything?" I stopped at one place, tapping my foot. "Con, what the hell..." I pointed a finger at him, "I'm here because Murray thought I could help, not to overshadow you!" Dammit, this whole situation was crappy. Face set in a frown, he came around his desk and motioned for me to sit down, so I plopped in the chair, arms still over my chest. I could really use a damn Chup, but I left my purse in the car, knowing Herrin was going to be a second dropping the package off.

He took a breath in, "Con let me explain, it's nothing like you think." You were waiting, looking anywhere but his eyes. He leaned against his desk, and explained calmly, "I know what you do is important, just as important as what I do. I believe you when you see you've seen stuff, I haven't first hand but I believe YOU. I'm not saying I believe in everything but strange things are happening here. I told Karen not to tell anyone because, well you've met her. She's the quintessential house wife, if she were to discuss these things with her group of girl friends, pearls would be clutched, and she would be outed, I went to school with these women, trust me I know" He rubbed his temple. Oh. He continued, "It has nothing to do with you being a woman, ok? I'm beginning to see you're more than capable" Well shit. I quickly glanced at him, he looked back at me with conviction. "Plus as much as I trust my guys, we're not exactly Chicago police, we only have limited experiences when it comes to some cases. I'm not one of those people who wouldn't ask for help just to save my ego." My anger dissipating immediately. His eyes soften up when I could fully look up at him. "I'm sorry Hopper." Looking right back at me, he nodded once, searching my eyes. "I get so much shit you wouldn't believe it. Both Herrin and I have fought tooth and nail to be where we are at this point in life. Some people would have appreciated if I never had my magazine at all." Hopper was listening. I looked back down, "Sorry I'm feral." I felt dumb, this was Hopper. My cousins friend and Murray was nothing like that I

doubt he would take up that kind of company, I should have known he wouldn't be like that. I heard him laughed, "Well now that I know I'm not about to be socked, is there anything else you need?" I looked at his desk full of papers, shit of course he was busy. I shake my head, "No, that's all" I was just going to go drop off at the edge of a cliff. I got up and moved to the door, opening it and leaving. Hopper moved with me, "By the way, you look nice." He waved at my outfit, a small kernel warmed in my heart, "Thanks Hopper." I meant it. Just as I was about to walk away, "Oh and for a feral person, you're not so bad." He gave me a cheeky grin, throwing my words back at me. I was not blushing as I turned around and waved him off, hearing his small laugh. Passing Florence she gave me a nod and smile.

I get back in my car, Herrin was waiting patiently reading his book, he looked over to me, "Ya'll good? No ones dead right?" I gave him a laugh, "No, no one's dead, it was just a misunderstanding." I admitted, Herrin continued, "Hoppers a good one, even for a cop. He knows about Terry and even asked questions like how long we've been together." I gave a small Ha! As I started to pull out of our spot. "You told him about Terry?" Usually he wouldn't volunteer any information when we left Chicago, yes there were still people in Chicago that made a big deal about someone who is gay, but it was way less than little towns they visited. The windows open, the early afternoon air felt nice. "Well I mean we did talk getting pizza last night."

Side eyeing him, "Oh?" I will admit I was curious what they talked about if he's bringing it up. "Ya, he asked about other cases we have done, I told him about you batting that toxic fish at Love Canal." I smiled at that, rememebering when we were once again out late at night in a row boat. The only light was our head lamps, the moon was new and it was foggy. Herrin was collecting water samples, and then all noise stopped, at first I thought I'd gone deaf. I clutched the oar, looking around, wound up. Herrin slowly sat back, when we started to hear a bubbling. Hearing something break the water, I looked left and saw a monstrous fish coming right for Herrin, "Duck." I yelled right as I swung the oar with all my might. He ducked just in time as I whacked that fish home. We hurried up and got out of the canal after that.

"He said you were a bad ass, well he said it more under his breath but I hear everything." He smiled big. My toes dance, "It's because I am." Not even trying to hide the smile I couldn't help. He just

hummed in agreement as we stopped by the store to grab a few things. If Hop was letting us stay at his cabin as long as we needed, I can pay him back by cooking dinners. I saw the take away containers in his trash, he's probably too tired at the end of the day to cook real food, which I'm guilty of doing that sometimes as well. Herrin grabbed some snacks as well as some beer, I still had some wine back at the cabin. While checking out, there was a small stand with cone incense on it, I got a couple of different scents.

Hours later, we were listening to the music on the radio while I checked on the pan in the oven- almost done, Herrin and I shared a joint. I made sure and opened the window a tad and had the incense going. I had changed into a Queen t-shirt, colorful stripped shorts with black knee-high socks. Herrin was in a Purple Rain t-shirt and gray sweat shorts, feet bare and bobbing to the music. The song changed to "Piece Of My Heart" as I heard Hops blazer pull up. "Shit." I laughed as I put the joint out and back into the baggie in my bag. Just as I shut it, Hop came in the door, and I was like a deer in the head lights. Damn if he didn't take my breath away with his stare. We just looked at each other for several seconds, finally, "It smells and sounds like Woodstock in here Feral." his voice was deep, "Well I didn't get to go so let me live a little." I gave him a slow smile. Hopper broke our stare and nodded a hello to Herrin.

"And why didn't you get to go?" He took his coat and hat off mumbling under his breath, "The guys are going to think I'm harboring hippies." Herrin and I laughed way too hard at that. "Well, my dad was convinced I'd be offed by a serial killer or something of the sort. Plus we were doing summer classes, so we could start our business as soon as it was possible." Herrin nodded, "Even though we missed the last opportunity we had at seeing Hendrix!" Herrin slightly hissed, he loved Jimi Hendrix. I sighed, "Sadly." Agreeing. "So did you go?" I leaned against the counter. He gave me a sad small smile while sitting on stool, "I had just enlisted for Vietnam, following a bad break up." he explained. "Shit, that's bogus." Herrin referring to his relationship. The timer went off breaking the silence. I grabbed the pan out of the oven, "Fellas, may I present roasted potatoes, carrots, mushrooms with breaded herb crusted chicken." I loved to cook when I was high, I paid attention to the little details. "Yesssss." Herrin was more than ready to dig in. "Goddamn that looks and smell good, it's nice to have some homemade food, thanks Feral." Hopper accepted his plate, "So that's my name now?" I teased

him getting my own plate. He hummed around his fork. “Feral?” Herrin questioned, I groaned ducking my head as Hopper laughed.

Notes for the Chapter:

fun fact Herrin's name I picked from the map, it's a town in Illinois.

4. 4

Notes for the Chapter:

Alexei's Russian was suppose to be in bold italics but something happened...

Tuesday

I turn over again and looked towards the window, eyes going over the darkened orange plaid window covers. I was snuggled into the couch but for the life of me I couldn't fall asleep, I glance down at my watch, 1:22 am. Sighing and finally getting up, I go through my bag and got a Chup. I put on my leather jacket, well the one I stole from my ex before leaving him for cheating. He was a dumb ass but at least he had good fashion sense. Unlocking and opening the door, I went and sat on the porch swing with my lollipop. Coca cola flavor. I could see some moonlight coming through the trees, the wind was barely blowing- a slight chill to it. Watching the trees slowly move, I think about what we needed to do tomorrow, since getting the results from the sample Herrin got would take at least until Thursday. We could go to the place Karen pointed out to us, do some digging around.

The screen door shutting snapped me out of my thoughts, Hoppers towering form came over. I bit the inside of my cheek, "Hey Hop." I said quietly, my voice was a bit scratchy. He sat down, "Can't sleep either?" He asked, "Nah." I didn't elaborate, he hummed deeply. I heard an owl hooting right above us. I peeked over at him, he was looking to the forest ahead, he was wearing a white t-shirt and gray sweats. His thumb was tapping on his leg like he was listening to a song. I rewrapped my Chup and held it, "So how long were you enlisted?" I asked gently looking at him. "Almost a year, we had only been there for 3 months. My troop was out scouting an area, some grenades were thrown. A tree branch came down on my shoulder crushing it, damn near took my arm off." I gasped, and he looked towards me shaking his head, "It's fine, I honestly don't even remember the pain, my adrenalin was pumping. By the time I did come down, they gave me pills on the helicopter. Plus I got," He paused and reached for his shirt and pulled it over one shoulder, "I

got titanium in me, and a cool scar.” I gave a small laugh and ran my finger over said scar, his skin was hot to the touch. My breathing got a bit deeper, “It is pretty bad ass.” I whispered looking up to him, he was looking right back and shivered a little. Giving a small laugh, pulling fingers away, “So you to know what it’s like to be assaulted by a tree.” He snorted which made me laugh louder. Putting his shirt back on I added, “What a shitty war.” I looked forward again. He breathed in and out a, “Yea, it was.”

“So a break up made you go off to war?” That was concerning. He laughed sadly, “Yea I know how it sounds. My ex, she was my high school sweetheart. We both just started trying to have a kid, going to get married that August, and after 5 weeks, she thought maybe she was pregnant. Turns out the rabbit died for nothing, we weren’t” I shivered, glad now days we had the convenience of a stick to see if we were positive. He continued, “We both wanted a kid, but especially her, she always wanted a family.” He kept swinging us, “Fate fucked up. It turned out she couldn’t have kids.” My stomach dropped, fucked fate indeed, my heart hurt for both of them “I’m sorry Hop.” He didn’t respond back, he just went on with his story, “I told her we could even adopt, but something in her broke that day. She moved to Indianapolis to start over, last I heard from her she was doing good. She got a job teaching Kindergarten, I think it has really helped her. Which is great, but that day broke me too. Knowing I couldn’t just magically give the woman I loved what she wanted. I told her I’d marry her anyways, ya I wanted a kid but I loved her.” Oh Hop I thought, my hand went to the thumb drumming one, he opened it up and I held on.

He looked down to me and gave me a small smile, “I’m sorry I didn’t mean to kill the vibes.” Shaking my head, “Never Hop.” I stopped him. We just swung, drinking in the nights sounds, thinking. After sometime my eyelids grew heavy, I felt Hopper squeeze my hand before letting go, “Let’s get some sleep Con.” Agreeing we got up, and he locked the door behind us. I took off my jacket and put my candy in my bag. Before he got to his door, he turned around to say goodnight. I couldn’t help it, I went and gave him a hug. I felt him squeeze me back, his frame was solid. He smelled like the woods- like freshly dried laundry. So warm, and safe. I released him with a quick goodnight of my own, dived into the couch wrapping my blanket around me. I heard him give a quiet laugh, and he shut his door.

Later that day Herrin and I were on the road once again, but we didn't have that far to go this afternoon. In five minutes we arrived at the area, it was half field-half forest. I refilled Silver Bullet this morning and it was sitting in my gun holster Hopper insisted I have. It was nice, broken in black leather one, I felt guilty for liking the smell of it. He told me it was his first one when he became a cop, I told him I couldn't take it, but here we are. There was a slight chill in the air today, the wind picked up blowing good but not blowing us away at least. "Let's clear the field, then go into the woods, sound good?" I asked Herrin. "Roger that." He nodded. We both went to opposite ends, and did a sweep meeting in the middle. "Anything?" he asked, "I saw a couple of mole holes, nothing unusual." I twirled a small stalk of a plant. "Same, but I did notice over there," He pointed to the edge of the field where it looked disturbed, plants pushed aside, "That might be a deer trail or something went through there at least."

"Good eye." I told him as we started over there. The plants there we definitely disturbed, some broken sticks, and weird prints. "Hey, look at this." I said crouching down getting a closer look. The prints were very unusual, "Anything you've ever seen?" He asked me. There were two different kinds, I'm guessing the front and back legs. One had 4 long thick indents, the other almost looked like rounded triangle shape with toe like indents, holes where claws would be in both. I looked to him, "Hell no." We heard a cow in the distance and it straightens us up. "Plaster em'?" He asked looking towards the woods. I took Silver Bullet out and turned the safety off, then re-holstered it but I left the clasp off. "Yup."

Something clearly came to the field, but turned back and didn't go in it. You could see all the tell-tale signs of a presence. The air had a weird stench in it as well, Herrin pulled out the camera and started to document everything. I wrote down some notes, as Herrin mixed some plaster and poured it in the print, we would let them set and pick them up on the way back. We went further down the path and through some trees I could see another field, which sat a small white house with a big porch. Herrin stopped besides me, "Want to see if anyone's home and ask some questions?" He asked me, there was an older looking bicycle by the tree, "Sure." We walked up the stairs and Herrin knocked.

After a few moments I saw the blinds reveal hazel eyes looking out at us, the blinds snapped back closed and a man slowly opened the door

4 inches. He was tall with curly short brown hair, and wiry glasses, adorable cheeks. He looked over to Herrin then back to me, opening the door more, he gave me a smile, "Well hello there cutie." Russian. My eyes narrowing, a small smirk on my face, "Well aren't you bold." I said in perfect Russian, he blushed sputtering, "Ssorry, I'm Alexei, how can I help you." He gave me a handshake, then did the same to Herrin, repeating his name with a nod. Herrin wasn't fluent in Russian, but he knew the basics. I always filled him in when it was a language he didn't know, he in turn was fluent in Japanese which came in hand a time or two, filling me in.

He invited us in, gesturing towards the small dinning table with 4 chairs. "Do you know any English?" I inquired so Herrin would be able to understand our conversation, he shook his head and motioned with his two fingers, "The tiniest bit, sorry." I told him it was fine and that I'd be translating what I needed to Herrin, he nodded, "Good." Alexei agreed. "So," I started, "How is it that you a Russian man is in here in the Midwest of America?" I was curious. "Well I worked in a top secret organization, which isn't in operation anymore." He clarified, letting us know that's the only reason he was telling us. "I was a scientist, and they used me under duress with my parents as collateral." He sighed, "I should have known, they were already eliminated a lieutenant drunkenly slipped out, after that I was just numb." He said sadly. Both Herrin and I expressed as sympathies, "A pawn for the government." He looked down towards folded hands, "I was scheduled to be testing a machine out for them, I was taking a smoking break and something exploded. I woke up later, everyone was dead or gone. I suppose the men that were in charge either died or forgot about me." He shrugged.

"So you've been staying in this house the whole time?" Surely a Russian man would be big talk for this town, Hop definitely would have told us since Alexei is somehow connected to the case. He nodded, "Yes, when I would have to go get groceries I try to be small as possible. Which I'm running out of money, I had a small stash" He looked into my eyes and gave me a stern look, "If I get caught, if they send me back to Russia I'm dead." Herrin and I shared a look, we had to help. "Okay, let me make a call, see if I can't get something worked out." He looked like a puppy wagging his tail, "Yes please, but the power went out a day ago, the phone is off." I looked to him astonished, "Alexei, were you just going to stay here? What would you do with no electricity?" The Midwest got cold and snowy in the

winter, there's no way he could just survive without even a fireplace and this house doesn't have one. I explained to Herrin, he looked mad. "Right explain to him he is coming with us, and we'll figure everything out." Herrin was a mother hen type, I loved that about him he was always looking out for you. "Alexei, gather your things, your coming with us." He popped right up giving us thanks as he starts to gather a small green duffle bag.

"We should probably give Hopper a heads up." Herrin suggested to me, nodding, "We'll stop by the station." We all headed back towards where we started, picking up the plasters, "Hey Alexei, do you know anything about these creatures that have been spotted here recently?" We had forgotten why we went to the house in the first place. "The officers would whisper about multidimensional creatures. It would confuse me, I thought maybe we were building a weapon. They never gave us the whole diagram nor plans. Just small pieces at a time, and we weren't allowed to talk to each other." He went off into his own head thinking.

Getting back to the car I put his duffle bag in the back, it was a tight squeeze. I got in the drivers seat, "Right, it's been a downer of a morning, Alexei we are going to welcome you to America." I gave them both a smirk, Herrin knew what I meant. Before we had to go back to adulating we needed a second. I drove down the street behind some old buildings, there were trees on the other side with a quiet creek running through. I pulled out my baggie and lighter, "This here is electric lettuce, you ever had it before?" He looked back wide eye, "Marijuana?" I nodded, "Da Comrade." He gave out a sheepish laugh, "No." I lit a joint up, inhaled and passed to Herrin, "Well you can try it if you like." I went to roll the window down just in case he didn't. "I would very much like to try please." He looked like a kid in a candy store, I rolled the window back up. "Perfect, welcome to America!" Herrin let out a huzzah as he passed it to him.

15 minutes later we were walking down the road and around the corner. I stopped them, "Alexei may I present a national treasure for all the lovers of marijuana, 7-11." I swept my arm in dramatic fashion, his eyes grew larger in excitement. He looked over to me, "I'll pay you back I promise you." He said seriously, I waved him off, "Welcome to America, remember." Herrin led us in. There was an older lady looking at us with narrowed eyes behind the counter, I gave her a little shake of my hand saying hello. She sniffed and disappeared, okayyy I thought. Herrin went back to the chips, I went

with Alexei to the Slurpee machine he was in wonder of. I pointed to the cups and lids, "Get the biggest one." I told him, and after making sure he knew how to use the machine, I went over to the wall to look at the sweet snacks. I hummed as I scanned the spread, I wanted something sweet but not too sweet. I grabbed a couple of packs of candy cigarettes, oh irony.

I went around the corner to the frozen area and got an orange Sun Lolly. I was shutting the door when I heard a throat clearing behind me, making me jump and turn around. "Shit Hop you scared me!" I let out a breath of relief, Alexei came around the corner, "Cutie, look, nachos!" He teased me. "Melashka?" I heard Hop ask, "Their nachos are so good Alexei." I gave him a grin, "Alexei? What..." Herrin came around the corner cutting him off, "I got BBQ, regular, and cheddar...hi Hop." Herrin grinned.

We all jumped, "Those are the ones Chief, coming in here smelling like the devils sin!" The older lady pointed to us in conviction, her eyes were the jury, judge, and executioner. I went pale, she called the police on us because we had the munchies? Hops furrowed look pointed towards the lady, "Alright Mrs. Miller, I'll handle this." He pulled out a 20 dollar bill, and I was about to object, but he gave me a look and I kept quiet. This whole situation was embarrassing. After he paid and scooted us all outside, and by his blazer. He's not really going to arrest us? I thought.

He looked at all of us for a moment then, "What's with Smirnoff here?"

"Hey!" Alexei shouted, guessing he knew what he was saying, I try to defuse the already horrible situation, "Hop his name is Alexei, Alexei this the Chief of police Jim Hopper." He looked towards me, "He's not corrupt is he?" Herrin gave a belly laugh, Hops eyes hardden a bit more. I shook my head, "No he's actually a good guy, and he's helping us. I would play nice, it's his cabin, so he has a say if you can stay." I warned him, they were both adults, and they both needed to play nice. There was heat in Hops eyes while watching me, and not the angry kind. I break eye contact, warmth rushing to me. Alexei shifted, "Of course, please translate for me yes?" He asked, I nodded, "Tell him my name is Dr. Alexei Utgoff, I'm pleased to meet him. I will try to not be a burden, and I will help out in any way possible." He went to shake hands as I finished what he was saying. Hop gave him a strong handshake and nodded, "You have a passport?" Alexei must have understood, "I have my passport back in my duffle bag, is

he suspicious of me?" I told Hopper where his passport was and I said to Alexi, "It's fine, he probably just wants to check you out, I won't let anything happen." I knew Hopper wouldn't do anything, he just a cop of course he's going to want to see some I.Ds or paperwork.

"Herrin you want to lead the way?" Herrin saluted and turned on his heels, we all followed him. We got around the corner and down to the car, Alexei got into his duffle bag and pulled out an envelope that had his passport in it. "We didn't even need these, we came over covertly." I translated, Hopper gave me a look, "Just how the hell do you know Smirnoff and where did he come from." Alexei gave a huff. "Look Hop he needs our help, Alexei needs our help." I gave emphasis to his name. I told him what we did earlier, and how we came to met Alexei. I told him what happened to him, and what conditions he was living in. "So I'm going to go back to the cabin with your permission of course, and I want to call Murray. I know he can help, he's got friends everywhere it seems." Hopper gave a long deep sigh, "I don't like it, but I trust you two, and he's not putting off a nefarious vibe." He left off, Alexei shifted, "Is the American going to help me?" He got back for the Smirnoff comment, Hopper just hummed staring at him. "Yes, he is like a bulldog, he can look scary but is really so lovable." I smiled at Hop, "Thanks Hop!" He just hummed again.

"By the way can we keep the pot smoking at the cabin, your going to give Mrs. Miller a heart attack." I laughed, "Give her a heart attack, those eyes could kill!" Hopper laughed making me have butterflies. "But I will, I'm sorry I'm not trying to make your job difficult." I explained to Alexei what I agreed too. "So he is corrupt, letting you go for Marijuana." He said, Herrin decided to join in the conversation, "It's because he likes her, so a little corrupt." They both started laughing as I blushed, Hopper gave me questioning look. "Nothing, just joking." I told him, again with a look and a hum. "Alright I will see you guys later than, I have a couple of more things to wrap up a work before I can get off." As Herrin motioned to Alexei to get in the car, Hop gave him a I'm-watching-you motion with his fingers, Alexei looked back at him, "Hopper!" I exclaimed, "Well." He shrugged his shoulders and didn't elaborate. This time I hummed, Hopper came closer, I could feel the heat off of his body. He slowly reached out for me, latching my gun holster clasp closed, "See you tonight Feral." I swallowed, daring not to look at his lips, "See you." He gave me a knowing smirk and turned around back towards the

7-11. I let out a little breath then I heard from the peanut gallery in my car with Oooooo's. Hushing them I started up the car, we had to drop by the grocery store for more food for tonights dinner. Fish with green beans and mashed potatoes with gravy. An apple pie for dessert- another part of welcome to America for Alexei. There was a book store two doors down, I asked Herrin to see if they had a Russian to English book, while me and Alexei picked up what we needed. We all met back at the car and were off to the cabin again.

Notes for the Chapter:

War, what is it good for? Absolutely nothing. Side note Alexei is everything <3

5. 5

We had the radio going again, leaving the pot in my bag for right now. I sipped my wine as I stirred the gravy. Herrin and Alexei were on the couch, playing checkers. The call earlier to Murray went great he was more than willing to help, going off on a tangent about how it was two governments pitting their people against each other. I agreed with him but I had a long day, I just wanted to relax, but I was happy he was going to help. Apparently he did have friends everywhere, he knew someone who could make some papers up for Alexei. He would be legal here soon. He'd stay with us for now, when we go back to Chicago we are going to stop by Murrays again and Alexei would stay with him until he could get his own place. Which was good for Murray, he always needed something to ground him.

Just as I pull the fish out of the oven, Hopper comes through the door. I gave him a smile, "Perfect timing." I sat the pan down on a dish towel. "American, welcome." Alexei had read some of his book this afternoon, me helping. Hopper gave him a smirk and nodded, "Smirnoff." I snorted as I plated everything. Herrin and Alexei sat to eat, Hopper and I stood. I filled him in, Alexei was going to stay with Murray when we went back that way. "Why do I have a feeling you're leaving something out?" He asked me, I beamed to him, "Need to know bases Hop." Herrin laughed, "Plausible deniability." he told him. Hopper didn't look convinced, "Right..." He trailed off. "Trouble?" Alexei asked, I shook my head.

After we were all done with dinner, I asked Hop if it was ok if I smoked. "Going to turn my cabin into a damn hippie commune." He said cheekily. I hummed amused as I lit the joint up, Herrin put on some incense, Alexei watched me, "Can I have some more cutie?" I coughed a bit, "Alexei you've got to stop that." I know he was just kidding...I donno. I sneaked a peak at Hopper real quick as I gave Herrin the joint, Alexei could wait his turn. Hopper was out right staring at Alexei with a questioning look. Herrin was the savior, "Hop you ever smoked weed before?" Hopper looked at him for several seconds before confessing, "Maybe." Herrin passed the joint to Alexei, I let out, "What!" Hopper was not so square as he appeared...not that he didn't look edible, an after thought. I told Alexei what they said, he looked at Hopper he handed out the joint and hummed in question to him. I couldn't look away, it was like I was a scientist

observing something monumental. Hopper gave me a smirk and accepted the joint from him, he took a long slow drag while watching me, as if I was the something. Chills before giving him a slow smirk that grew, "You fell for my hippie agenda." I informed him grabbing the joint back, sucking in a good amount, I had baby lungs, so I had to be careful not to take too much. Herrin laughed, so did Alexei when he told him. Hopper hummed in agreement and gave me a goofy smile.

As the rotation went on I turned on some music. Hopper came out of his room changed into his t-shirt and sweatpants I happen to notice, "I'll do the dishes tonight since you did it yesterday." He motioned to Herrin. "Thanks man." He told Hop. "If you keep cooking your delicious meals, I will gladly help out as well." Alexei offered to me. I gave him a smile, "Thanks!" The both of them starting another game of checkers. I was happy to cook if I didn't have to do dishes. My foot was tapping with the music as I sat on the stool by the kitchen counter, "So Hop." He looked over to me suspicious, "Con." He replied. "Have you broke any other laws?" I was curious, I needed sordid details, I told him as much, and he gave out a belly laugh, "Sordid? Who uses that word, old ladies from book clubs that's who Feral." He answered himself, putting a cleaned plate in the dish drainer. I felt my ears blush, "Hey, it's a good enough word." I defended myself. "Ok," He succeeded, "Believe it or not, I've had 4 speeding tickets." I gasped, "Sordid!" He put another plate in, "I know right? I used to drive my old man's truck like hell back in the day."

"Well Hop your a regular Al Capone." I teased him, "Anything else?" He squinted at me, "Filing this information away for down the road?" He asked, I scoff, "Never." I was mocked offended. He smiled looking down at the sink. "I was charged for assault, but it was dropped later." Herrin looked over, "I got to hear that story." He translated to Alexei, albeit not perfect, but he was getting a lot better especially since he gets to practice with Alexei.

Hopper got done with the last dish and put his hip to the sink, arms crossed, "When I was a kid before I had become a cop, I was at the bar downtown celebrating New Year's Eve with my ex Diane and some of our friends. I heard a commotion at the other end of the bar, I saw my sister and a guy that she had recently been dating. I could tell he was drunk right when I looked at him, not a happy drunk either. He was standing over my sister, a glass on the floor. I made

my way through the crowd to see if she needed help. When I heard what he was saying to her and the tears in her eyes, well he looked up just in time to see me swing." I winced, Hopper looked like he packed a fucking punch, that couldn't have felt nice. "He reached over to the bar as I went to punch him again and hit my hand with a bottle. It broke giving me quite the scrapes." He showed us his right hand, you could see some faded scars. "Bad ass." I was impressed.

"What happened then?" I translated for Hop. "I didn't even realized at the time what happened, and socked him again, he went down that time. Cops were called, and they took me in, I asked Diane to call my folks to pick up my sister. The next day after her boyfriend sobered up in the clank across from me, he pleaded with me saying he was all sorts of sorry. I told him I didn't care, he doesn't talk to any woman that way, especially to my sister." My heart palpated, Hop was a fantastic guy. "The only decent thing he did was refuse to charge me and stopped seeing my sister. She definitely wasn't heart broken, I guess that was the first time she saw him drunk, she wasn't planning on hashing anything out." We were all quiet for a moment, finally Alexei said, "Even as an only child, I know not to fuck with someones sibling." I laughed and translated, Hopper snorted, "You got that right Smirnoff." Alexei smiled at him, I think they'll be just fine.

After another hour of taking turns playing checkers and talking, it was getting late I stood and stretched, as Alexei asked, "Where should I sleep." I blinked. Unless Hopper had a hidden cot somewhere, there was only the recliner, couch, and his bed. Whelp I didn't think about that. Seeing Hop and Herrins face after he told him the translation, they didn't either. "Crap sorry I didn't think about that, we could always get a motel room?" I questioned Hopper, I felt bad enough breaking into his routine. I really didn't want to leave though, not that I would admit that to myself as I pushed that thought down. Hoppers eyebrows shot up, "Absolutely not. First of all the motel is well...questionable. At best." He let some authority slip in, "Plus it's late and I don't want any of you driving tired."

Herrin decided to plop down in the recliner, trying to hide a look behind Hopper, "I don't care what ya'll do, but I'm beat and I already have dibs." He patted the recliner. I gave him a little glare back, knowing what he was up to. Alexei was a quick one, "This couch looks good." He too plopped down. Usurpers! I looked back to Hop right as he said, "You can share my bed, I'll put pillows between us if

that makes you feel better.” He looked unsure of himself which was enduring. Oh, this would be too fun, I looked him up and down, “Only if you don’t steal my virtue.” He sputtered, “Con!” Now it was his turn to blush, victory. I laughed, “Alright, I’m going to use the bathroom, will be right there.” I stopped teasing him. I heard him hum in response.

Washing my face clean, I put a new band-aid on my leg. After using the restroom, I came out. Alexei cursed and pointed to my forehead, “What the hell happened?” He looked concerned. I groaned a bit, I patted his arm, “Long story bud, I’ll tell you tomorrow. Night!” I said to them both. “Night.” Herrin was half asleep already. “Night bruised cutie!”, Alexei said. I narrowed my eyes, “Still bold I see. Go to sleep!” I pointed at him, he just laughed and turned around with his blanket. I heard Hopper whisper something, but I couldn’t hear as I turned away from Alexei. “What?” I asked him, “Hmm, oh nothing.” He really did make a line with some pillows in the bed. I shut the door softly, “You didn’t need to really make a pillow line.” I thought he was joking. I looked up to him, he was on his side of the bed sitting against the headboard, legs crossed. I got lost in his blue eyes, as was becoming habit.

He looked like someone who just won the big teddy bear at the carnival. I felt a jolt melt over my skin. I took a breath, for fuck sake he’s just looking at me...I looked down at his lips, handsome smile...which was slipping. I looked back up to his eyes, just as I heard the same terrible scream I heard the other night. “Jesus Christ.” I pulled my blanket down, getting under it fast. Hopper laughed, “You get used to it.” I looked at him like he was insane, as he was getting under his own blanket. I felt bad for Hop, between me and the pillows, he left himself little room. “Ok.” I announced, I took the pillows and threw one at him and used mine as an extra pillow for head, I got comfy. Hop just gave me a questioning look, I huffed. “I promise I won’t steal your virtue Hop.” I smiled at him. He lifted off from his side of the bed, coming closer to me. I could clearly see the deep blues in his eyes and smell his cinnamon breath as he lifted his arm coming towards me slowly. I didn’t move an inch. His hand passed me and shut the light off that was on the wall next to me, “Good to know.” His voice was deep and so close. Finally, I felt him move away and get situated on his side, “Night Con.” His voice held a smirk. What.The.Fuck. I just stared at the ceiling, a little “Night Hop.” came out of me fast. After a bit I heard his breathing even out

and slowly I drifted to sleep.

Wednesday

Everything was cloudy but I felt warm. Like on a freezing cold, snowy day I would be worshipping my bed, only leaving for necessities. My back was on fire, I was molded into something and it was a perfect fit. Slow hot puffs of air tickled my ear, I didn't mind. I must have dozed off again. I felt a weight on my hip, a thumb tracing it unconsciously. A leg came up between my calves and hooked our feet. Another arm was under my neck, my head was on the perfect pillow I rubbed into it. A feeling went through my body slowly, slipping back into sleep. I then felt a hand on my cheek, a thumb rubbing over it before brush the edge of my bottom lip. I hear the door close slowly, something missing as I adjusted my blanket.

Later that day I was having a Chup while Alexei was showing us some papers he collected before he had to exit the building, the smoke getting to him. Lemon. None of the papers made sense to me, math and science wasn't my strong suit. Herrin was 50/50 when it came to it, hence why we needed Terry. The last scientist on our team was Betty, she had only been with use for two years. She got married and wanted to move back to her hometown to have kids. I missed her, but she sends us letters with pictures of her and her family so that helps. "It's like we're missing one thing, I can't think of what connects all these together." He said concentrating with a frown. He shakes his head sighing, "I don't have enough information." I pat his back looking over his shoulder, "It's fine, maybe Murray can help." I suggested. "Maybe." He didn't sound convinced, Alexei didn't know yet but Murrays knowledge was vast and obscure. He was like a walking cyclopedia on conspiracy theory steroids. "Anyways me and Herrin are going to go now, read up on your english." I reminded him, he need something to distract him from his papers. "Good idea." He was a dedicated and fast learner. "We'll be back in a while." Herrin told him as we left.

I put my Chup back in the wrapper as we rolled up to the field we left yesterday, we were going to hike further in today see if we can't find more evidence or even see said cryptid. We got out of the car and headed to where we left off, passing the house Alexei stayed in. I was in a David Bowie t-shirt, red flannel around the waist with my jeans and trusty chucks. Herrin too was wearing jeans, we weren't taking any chances against poison ivy. He had on an earthy deep

green t-shirt, and multicolored cardigan with black Doc Martens. "So what's up with you and Hopper?" He asked me, I was running my hand through the tall grasses, "Something that's for damn sure." I smiled. I really liked Hop, he was sweet, helpful, respectful, and being so fucking tall and hot was an bonus, I blushed. Some of my exes are fine, we broke up on good terms, two exes sucked but that's the past. Hopper not even being my boyfriend has already blown them all out of the water. "Sooooooo what are you going to do about it?" I moved a branch, so he could pass, "I mean if an opportunity presents itself...whose to say he even likes me back?" I was a fucking liar, I knew he liked me back, Herrins look to me said as much. I still feel his thumb by my lips, my heart swooned a bit. "This isn't like the other guys Herrin, I don't want to screw anything up, ya know?" He nodded, like I said we were one and the same when it came to a lot of stuff but in romance, turtles. Especially since I knew this was already more serious than my exes.

"He's a good man." "For a cop." We finished together smirking at each other. "But we live in different states." I picked a up a leaf twirling it. "Yea but if you don't have to detour for Murray, it's only 4 hours." I hummed, "Good point, it would be nice to have someone, like really have someone. What if he dosen't want to even be anything serious though." Herrin gently moved a spider web, so we could duck under it. "Well Hun, that's a question you are going to have to ask him." I gave him a duh look, "Well you asked!" He laughed. I took a picture of some more prints we see, Herrin wrote it down in our notes. We measured them and since we believe they were the same creatures prints, we didn't take another cast. We hiked deep into the woods covering a lot of ground, but we didn't see anything else out of the norm. After another hour scouting the area we decided to head back to the car. I needed a good shower, we both aren't afraid to get dirty but yea a nice shower afterwards.

We got back to the cabin, I told Herrin he can have the first shower. Alexei was reading a newspaper and comparing it to his translation book. "Hello Con." His heavy Russian accent was adorable, "Hello Alexei, reading the newspaper?" I nodded towards it. "Yes, I thought it would help me learn faster." I sat on the stool, "Good idea." He gave me a big smile indicating he knew what I was saying. He seems to understand english better than speaking it, interesting. I watched him write down words in his notebook, putting the Russian word by it. After a while of watching him do this, Herrin got out of the

shower. "Hey would you and Alexei mind going to pick up some stuff for dinner tonight?" I asked him. "Sure, Alexei you want to take a break?" He put down the newspaper, nodding, "Please." I gave him the list and waved them off, "Imma take a shower, see you when you get back!"

I went into the bathroom and looked into the mirror, noticing my concealer was coming off a bit. I got undressed, took off the band-aid off my leg, the scratch looking much better. I jumped into the shower, my bar of soap was vanilla jasmine my friend made special for me. I used it in my hair too, making it smell amazing. I scrubbed my face getting all the dirt and makeup off, then I did a quick pass with a razor on my legs and making sure I was all rinsed, I turn it off and got out. I towed down. I forgot my hair dryer, opening the door I crouched down by the bag outside of it. I grabbed it and my toothbrush, shutting the door fast to keep the warmth in. I blow dry my hair on low heat so it takes a good 5 minutes before it was semi dry. I turn it off letting it naturally dry from here, I brushed my teeth next. I heard steps outside the door, that was fast I thought to myself. I put on my bra and panties, along with some black stretchy shorts and my Mike Bossy NHL jersey I could swim in, same black knee-high socks. I put my wavy hair in a banana clip, and I looked at the bruising on my forehead. It was much better more yellow and less purple, I rubbed the ointment on it. I grabbed my hair dryer and opened the door, I put it back in my bag.

I looked up to the door open, Hopper smoking a cigarette outside. "Hey Hop, you off already?" I looked at my watch, it was only 1:13pm. He put out the cigarette and deposited it into an empty coffee can on the porch, "Nah just a slow day, thought I'd take my break here." He opened the screen door, "Where are the guys?" He asked, I sat back on the stool, "They went to go get some groceries for dinner." I lit up the rest of a half smoked joint, offering it to Hop, he declined, "Maybe after work." His eye sparked with mischievous, I gave him a small laugh, "Alexei was right you are corrupt." His eye turned dark as I exhaled. My breathing picked up as we heard my car park, and the guys got out laughing at something as they made their way up to the door.

I looked away from Hop and saw them enter, "Cutie I got you a Slurpee!" Alexei announced happily. I heard a growl before Hopper came up to him with a kitchen chair, putting his hand to Alexei's shoulder pushing and one leg came underneath his leg, Hopper sat

him down quickly. Didn't even spill the Slurpee, "No cutie, my Feral." He put a finger in Alexei's face, warning him. My eyes grew wide, a slow smile coming to my lips. "Got it?" Hopper was staring him down. He said feral with such conviction, my heart was hammering, my chest rising up and down fast. Rabbit. I know I should feel bad for Alexei but I don't, "Okay fine, fine." He told Hopper, holding a small smile. Hop just hummed as he straightened up, and he looked towards me. I got off the stool taking in his surprised look, I reached up and grabbed his chin and jaw pulling him towards me and crashing our lip together. I rub my hand down his jaw to the back of his neck, and he deepens it. I vaguely hear a screen door open-and-shut as I licked his lips for entrance. His hands rested on my hips, making a surprised noise as he felt my tongue ring sliding around. After a couple of seconds we broke apart breathing heavy, his forehead was against mine. "Shit." He whispered, but I heard and hummed in agreement.

We parted slightly, and he looked at me, "Go on a date with me, tomorrow night?" He offered. I looked from his eyes back to his lips, smiling I looked back up to his eyes, "Of course." He beamed back at me and leaned down to kiss me again, less heavy. He went over to grab his hat, "I would say I'm sorry about Alexei but I'm not." He said truthfully, "I'm not either." Alexei and Herrin, usurpers but good ones. Hopper came back up to me and put his hand behind my neck, thumbs rubbing my cheek. "I'll see you tonight." He said softly and gave my forehead a kiss, he turned to go to the door. I followed him, "See you tonight Hop." I'm sure my face was red and I had the same goofy smile he held.

I looked over at the guys that were on the swing with the newspaper...upside down. I just looked at them, finally Herrin let out a slow smile building and flashing his teeth, "I knew it would work." He told Alexei. I bit my lower lip and narrowed my eyes waiting for him to expand on his thought. "Male psychology 101." he finished. "You literally took the basics of psychology for our degree, and only that one!" I said pointedly, translating for Alexei. Herrin looked at me with a gleam in his eye, "Oh Con," He shook his head, "It's a guy thing." He tried to convince me, I just hummed. I went back inside to see the roach went out by itself, so I just got a new joint since they were back. "Well I guess it was the push I needed." I was only confessing that much, they would just have to take that crumb. They both came in and looked so proud, I hid a smile while lighting up,

“Whatever.” I said under my breath, they just laughed as I took a drink from my Slurpee.

Notes for the Chapter:

Hopper is teddy bear, go after his family, he is a grizzly!

6. 6

Terry called us later that day, Herrin was speaking to him while I had the rest of my lemon Chup. Alexei was waiting on us, Trivial Pursuit on the coffee table. Herrin was one question away from winning, history was left for him. "Alright, I'll call you tomorrow later afternoon. Love ya... I miss you too." He smiled and hung up the phone. "So", He started, "He got the liquid sample, he's going to test it but it'll take at least 15 hours to process." I nodded, "Great, I can't wait to hear the results." We were both anxious. Herrin came back over to the game while I took my lollipop out and picked a card, after reading it I groaned hard. "You're definitely going to get this!" I told him and translated for Alexei, "What president's ghost is said to haunt the White House?" Herrin broke out in a laugh and moved his game piece while telling me, "Abraham Lincoln."

I put my Chup back in my mouth, "Too easy." He just looked at me and in a sing-song voice said, "You're just a sore loser." He stuck his tongue out at me, I threw a pillow at him as Alexei watched us and laughed. "People really believe that?" Alexei asked us both. I started, "Grace Coolidge, Queen Wilhelmina, Mary Eben which was Eleanor Roosevelt secretary, Winston Churchill, Maureen Reagan, and Dennis Revell to name a few." I listed off, "Plus tourists and staff as well." Herrin finished for me. Alexei looked shocked, "Wow and do you guys believe in ghosts?" He didn't seem convince, he was a man of science. Though I like to say someday we will have the correct science to understand ghosts. "I'm 100 percent sure they exist." We have plenty of weird experiences with cases, there was no way to deny it. "I would say I'm 99.9% sure they do." Herrin told him, I gave him a look, "What it's good to be a bit skeptical." True but, "All the things we've experienced and your still not 100?" I asked him, he just gave me a small smile and shrug, "Herrin!" He just laughed at me. I gave up on him, "What about you?" I asked Alexei. He was thinking, "I think anything can be possible, but there are things out there that are implausible." I nodded "Fair enough."

That night I made spaghetti with a salad and bread sticks, we were just waiting for Hopper to get off. I was starting to get antsy, he usually was home by 6. The phone went off, I dove for it, "Hello?" I was hoping it was Hop, but a different voice came through, "Con Bauman?" The man asked, "Yes?" What the hell? I heard shuffling,

"This is Officer Callahan from the other day, Hop wanted me to call you and to tell you he would be home late." My whole body relaxed, with a small sigh, "Thank you for letting me know, is everything ok?" Hopefully nothing Hop couldn't handle. "Yes ma'am just a bad accident on 56 he's got to help out with." He informed me. "Shit, er sorry for the language, thank you for calling me again and you guys be safe!" I let him know, "Will do ma'am, g'night." He hung up. The guys looked curious, I explained it to them and plated our food up, leaving one in the oven for Hop when he got home. We ate, played some more games, and helped Alexei with his English.

Around 9 we all headed to bed, I went to Hoppers room and settled into the bed. It was in vain trying to read a book about the unresolved murder of Mary Fisher. I must have dosed off while reading, because I woke up to Hop giving me a kiss on my head and getting on the side of his bed, I turned over watching him. He said softy "Thanks for dinner." I yawned, "No problem Hop, what time is it?" I couldn't make out my watch in the dark. "About 11:15 when I last looked." He got his blanket in order. I cleared the sleep from my voice, "Was anyone seriously injured?" I really hoped not, but Callahan said it was bad accident. Hop sighed as he looked towards me, "No major injuries, they'll all live. Teenagers drinking and driving, their both so fucking lucky." His stare was hard, but not at me. "Wow, on a Wednesday, nonetheless late afternoon?" I asked. He sat against his headboard, "Small town Con, though I will say I sneaked some of my old mans liquor, I never drove afterwards." He admitted. I nodded in agreement, "Same." He looked drained and tired, I gave him a smile, "Come here, turn around a lay down." I let him get situated as I snuggled against his hot back, throwing my arm around his waist and rubbing my thumb on his belly right at the band of his sweat pants. "Thanks Feral." I could hear the smile in his voice, his hand coming to rest on mine. I give his shoulder a kiss, "Anytime." I told him as we fell asleep wrapped up.

Thursday

The next day I woke up with Hopper already gone, I wrapped my arms around his pillow and breathed in his earthy male scent, making me get butterflies. I couldn't wait for our date tonight, speaking of which I didn't exactly pack evening wear. Hmmm. I got dressed for the day, donning my regular band t-shirt and jeans. I came out of our room and see the boys eating, "Ooo what'chu

make?" I asked going over to the kitchen, my stomach giving a little growl. "Your American made it." Alexei replied. "Yum" I looked down to my plate, eggs, toast, and a cookie from Herrins and Alexeis shopping trip. Perfect.

I sat by Herrin to eat while they were playing a word game, going back and forth. After breakfast, Alexei cleaned the dishes. "So I'm going to town today to see if I can't find something a bit more date night material." I quoted with my fingers, "Do either of you need anything?" I asked them. Alexei wiped his hands dry, "Cherry Slurpee please." He beamed, I matched his smile, "Of course." I promised him. "I'm good." Herrin said to me while reading. I got out the phone book to check out the stores they had here, finding one downtown. "Alright," I said while grabbing my wallet, "See you guys in a bit." I shut the screen door and got in my car. Since moving some of our stuff into the cabin, I could actually see out of the back window now. It was a nice day out, about 60 degrees and overcast so the sun wasn't shining right in my eyes. I loved Fall, it smelled so nice out and you could feel something in the air, a current almost. The trees were pretty, the animals were getting for the winter, it was cute watching them. My fingers were tapping on the steering wheel to Electric Avenue. I drove downtown, parked in a lot and went into the store. I noticed some younger women talking by the cash register, "Need any help Hun?" The one with pretty short red hair asked, "I'm just looking thanks." I let her know with a smile. The one with long blonde curls let me know, "If you need anything let us know!" She was way too perky for this late morning, but I appreciated her helpfulness, "Will do." I went over to a rack humming while looking through the clothes. For a small town they had a decent clothing store I thought. Then I stopped on a dress: it was black, had butterfly sleeves, coming to a natural waist it was buttoned all the way down in the front stopping at mid thigh. There was black lacing over the fabric, it was perfect. I grabbed some cute black ankle boots as well, bringing my items to the check out. The blonde haired one was checking me out, Becky her name tag said, "We're having a special on our necklaces, black hair and black outfit a colorful necklace would make it pop." She suggested, not a bad idea, I looked. I found a pretty jade colored choker, I put it on the counter, "How about this?" She glanced at it then back to me, "Perfect, the jade brings out the greens in your eyes." I smiled, "Thanks!" I took my bag and walked back to the parking lot, I look over and see Hop with some

other officers walking out of the dinner with coffee. He looked up and seen me, I made a goofy face at him before quickly ducking into my car, I heard him laugh.

I drove down to the 7-11 as the wind picked up a bit. Thankfully a younger man was working there today, we greeted each other and I picked up what I needed, going back over to the register, I put the stuff down on the counter. While he was ringing me up, I looked over to my left at the door. Something caught my eyes but wasn't there anymore, I walked over. "Ma'am?" The guy asked me. "I left my wallet in my car, sorry I'll be right back." I told him. I went outside and looked to the right there was a girl with short wavy brown hair, she was probably only 13 if I had to guess. She was giving me an intense look, beckoning for me to follow her around the back. I looked around for a second, then decided to follow her. She was just a kid, but why wasn't she at school? I thought. I stopped in front of her, "Hi I'm Con, can I help you?" I hope she wasn't in some kind of danger. After a beat of silence, "Listen lady, you need to stop looking into the creatures. Their dangerous." She informed me, "Oh what do you know?" I was excited, which apparently was the opposite effect the girl was trying make. Suddenly I hear a loud sharp tone in my left ear, but it was gone as soon as my hand flew to it, "Ah." It hurt for a second, "I don't want you to get hurt." I rubbed my ear, "What?" I looked up but someone was gone? Who was gone. "What the fuck?" I said out loud as the pain left, I put my hand down. It seemed colder as I got goose bumps, why was I out of the store again? I went back in and threw down a ten dollar bill and got back into my car driving back to the cabin confused.

Around 4 Herrin decided to call Terry to check and see if the tests were done and to check in. I hear them chatting then clearly, "What, how is that even possible?" I perked up. I motioned for the phone, handed it over, "What's going on Terry?" I asked. "Somehow there's DNA, but it's DNA that shouldn't exist, or well nothing we can decode as of right now. It doesn't make natural sense." He concluded. That didn't make sense, "How?" I heard him sigh, "Beats me but if I can send it off to the university if you want?" The back of my neck tingled..."No, just freeze it for now please." He sounded mildly surprised, "If you want Con." I thanked him and gave Herrin back the phone. They talked for a while longer.

Later I was still getting ready when I heard Hop come home, I was wearing all the items I bought plus I was taking my leather jacket

with me. I put on concealer, lip balm with a tint of dark berry color and some mascara just to keep it simple. Wearing my hair down in its natural curls, and some silver hoops in my ears. I looked good if I do say so myself, I gave one last glance in the mirror. I walked out of the bathroom and noticed the guys eating pizza while Hop changed his outfit in the room. They told me I looked nice and I said "Thank you." I did a slow spin, I came back to see Hoppers face coming out of the room smiling at me. He was wearing a pastel floral shirt that had a roll on the sleeves showing off a bit of his biceps. He had jeans on as well and sneakers. He looked really good, but I couldn't help it, "Well hello Magnum." I walked over to him as I see color coming to his face, "They said it was in fashion." He mumbled, I stood on my tip toes and gave his rosy cheek a kiss, "You look good Hop." I let him know. He twirled me around, "You look like a dark dream." I laughed, "That's because I am." I told him. As we were leaving Herrin told us, "Have fun kids, be back by curfew!" He joked, "Ok Grandpa Alfred!" I said in return, we heard a "Hey!" I just waved him off and Hop opened the door to his blazer, "Feral." I smiled at him, using his hand to hop up into the seat, "Thank you good sir." He gave me a lopsided smile, shut my door and came around to his, and we were off.

We pulled up to a restaurant, "I'll be right back." Hop got out and headed in, curious. I rolled down my window, it was dusk but the cooler air felt nice. There were several people walking around getting their shopping done for the night. I see in the door mirror the arcade across the street, the sign comes to life with a small buzz. I hear the restaurant door open again and Hop headed to back with a basket, he set it down between us, "What's this?" It has a cute white lace cover over its contents. "Dinner" He gave me a smile while he began to back out, "So where off to then Hop?" I asked, he just gave a wiggle of his eyebrows, I returned his smile.

The stereo softy played, we were both quiet but it was comfortable. Pulling off the highway we turned on to a gravel road. The trees make a tunnel almost, they block out the dying light, making it dark. It looked spooky like Bigfoot could just step out at any moment, he would fit right in. We were going up a hill, passing a driveway or two. I see the break in the trees up ahead, we came through up to a space where the hill overlooked the forest, the town was lit up in the distance. The almost full moon made the best light, it was beautiful. My face was in a wide smile, "It's beautiful Hop." I'm still taking it in

as he parked and shut the lights off. "I'd thought you'd like it." He got into the basket, I looked around, "You sure no mountain lions are going to mess with us." I wiggled in my seat getting settled in, Hopper laughed, "I'm sure." He promised.

He pulled out two small bottles what looked like an individual serving of dark red wine, the kind that stained your lips. He handed me one, "Elderberry." I opened it up and took a small sip, it was semi-sweet, "Perfect." He sat his down and pulled out two containers, giving me mine. There was lasagna and a diagonal slice of baguette garlic bread, "Nice," It smelled delicious and the basil was potent, "Enzo's has the best Italian food." He passed me a fork, we started to eat as the stars got brighter. We talked about our family, about the article Murray wrote that Hop was interviewed for, Vietnam. I told him more about the magazine and some other cases we did. He told me what a young shit he used to be, surprising me he wanted to be a cop. I told him how Herrin was my prom date, the class got wasted on spiked punch, it made news. After we ate, we open the wine back up, clinked the bottles together and took a swig. "I've never had Elderberry wine before, this is wonderful." I took another sip. "Yea Enzo's grandma makes it actually." I laughed, "Well what a coincidence, my grandma made moonshine during prohibition." I gave a sly smile. He looked at me, "What would she say now, you go on a date with a cop." He looked amused. I hummed thinking, "Keep your enemies closer." I winked at him, he gave a small laugh, neither of us looking away. It felt perfect in his blazer, the wine and jacket keeping me warm. It was quiet, you could only hear us and animals scurrying about here or there. We've had two cars go by, none stopping.

He slid closer kissing me first, but I deepened it. His lips tasted like the wine and butter from the bread. My hand went to his chest as he pulled me closer by my neck, the other on his knee. I felt his left hand on my waist, kneading me. He gave a low moan when I nipped his bottom lip, the noise sent pure electricity through-out my body, "Fuck." I said low, then got on my knees, his leg between them as we kissed. "You taste like the sun." He murmured, I didn't know what the hell that meant but it sounded sweet coming from his perfect lips, my turn to moan. His hand came around from the back of my neck to the side, thumb swiping my jaw. We catch our breath as I rub my nose along his jaw, our chests breathing in sync, he hugged me pulling my waist closer. He twisted in his seat, kissing me again as

my leg came over his other on sitting in his lap. The glass was fogging as I moved my hands over his chest up to his neck, taking off his jacket, he allowed it. Hands coming back to my waist pulling me down on him hard, I felt him. I rubbed against him as I moaned into our kiss, feeling his jeans through my thin panties. His hands palming my ass over my dress, making me even hotter.

Suddenly we hear music getting louder and louder, a car whipping around the corner fast spray some rocks towards us, we broke our kiss, "What the fuck?" Hopper said mad, as I got of his lap and the car sped out of there going way too fast. I buckled up as Hop turned on his lights, "Sorry Con." He told me, he tore out following the car, "It's fine Hop." I reassured him as we pulled the car over, but it wasn't. Goddamn kids cock blocking me, as I saw Hop shine the light revealing 4 teens. He looked so cute when he was yelling at them about the responsibilities of driving. They looked scared, as they should be, I was satisfied. A ticket later, and we took the basket back to the restaurant.

"Wine and a movie back at the cabin?" He suggested, clearly not letting anything ruin our night. "Sure, can we get some more Elderberry?" I asked, it was my new favorite. He gave me a smile as he came close to give me a soft kiss, "Sure." My stomach got butterflies. He went in the restaurant.

Notes for the Chapter:

I know nothing about DNA or science, please don't come for me lol

7.7

We pulled up to the cabin with a bottle of wine, and a new movie called *Romancing the Stone*. It sounded like a good mix of action and romance, plus it had a excellent cast. As we exited the blazer, Herrin and Alexei was coming down the steps, "Hey" I said surprised, "Hey Con, I noticed that the bar downtown had a thirsty Thursday night, and I figured Alexei could use some good old fashion American beer." He gave me a subtle wink, Herrin was simply the fucking best. "Oh that sounds fun, we're just going to watch a movie," I held it up, "See you later." I nodded at them. Hop added, "Don't drink too much Smirnoff, and don't drink and drive, kay?" He says to Herrin, they both salute him, "I'll only have one I promise." Herrin tells him, Hopper just let out a hmmm. Which was pretty funny considering we just had a serving of wine, but then again we just had eaten too, not giving us much of a buzz. I waved at them while we made our way into the cabin as they left the driveway with my black beauty. Herrin was a great driver, I knew I could trust him with my car, although I preferred to drive.

The only light on was the little one over the kitchen table, Hopper grabbed my hand, and we went into our room. He had a TV in there, "Why don't you get comfy and I'll get the VCR and glasses for our wine." He suggested in my ear giving my cheek a small kiss, I looked up to him with a smile, "Sure." I put my jacket down while he went to go do that. I pulled my dress off quickly and got into my Queen t-shirt, it was long enough I didn't have to put on my shorts, so I didn't. I checked my band-aid on my leg really quick making sure it was still on properly, though the cut was probably good enough now I didn't need one. I got in the bed and rest against the headboard as Hop came back in. He plugged the VCR in while I got our wine ready, filling the glasses liberally now that we were at home.

Putting the glasses down I hear Hop tell me he'll be right back, with clothes in his hand. I re corked the bottle, only about $\frac{1}{4}$ left of it I put it in the fridge, then dive back under the blanket for warmth. Hopper came back in wearing his usual white cotton t-shirt and gray sweat pants. The way the t-shirt clung to him, gave me a blush as I took a sip while he put the movie in. He got under the covers and I handed him his glass. The movie was great, I wiggled my eyebrows when they found the marijuana, telling Hop it was a nice find, he laughed

at me. "Better than big old gems?" He asked curious, "Much, although I could sell the gems to buy more weed." I suggested, he softly threw his pillow at me, I laughed. When it was time for Jack to go get the crocodile Hop said, "In Vietnam they had two different types of crocodile you would have to look out for, the Siamese which I would totally could get a gem back from, then there was the Saltwater crocs, big boys- I wouldn't stand a chance." I pat his shoulder, "I donno Hop you're pretty big." I gave his bicep a squeeze, he gave me a blush and pulled me into his lap sitting sideways, making me almost lose my wine, I gave a small yelp. He smiled down at me and put my wine on the side table.

"You're so beautiful Con." He rubbed his cheek against mine as he said into my ear. I vaguely hear closing music in the back ground as I lean into him giving a small kiss. I cup his jaw running my hand down to his neck, chest and finding purchase at his lower stomach above his pants, but under his shirt. I turned around so I was facing him. One of his hands rested on my hip, while the other held the side of my neck bringing me closer, "And smart, so brave." He listed off before kissing me, the wine made my blood warm, but Hopper made my blood light on fucking fire. I was already so wet, "Hop" I moaned as he nibbled hard on my neck, leaving a mark for sure. His hands went to my shirt to take it off, I let him leaving me in my black panties and black laced bra, I was a good b size. Hopper lifted his eyes back towards me and said "Beautiful." He confirmed kissing me again deepening it as he moved the covers, so I was in his lap, my center moving over his clothed cock. I sucked his tongue as I felt him shiver, bucking up into me, "Fuck!" I let out, my hands went up his shirt taking it off and putting them back on his shoulders.

He turned us around, I felt him unclasp my bra. One of his hands came to rest below my boob, and the other went under my bra to rub my nipple, I hissed a little. "So sensitive." He teased in my ear. His hand felt so hot as he palmed my breast. Finally, he untangled the bra from me and threw it over his shoulder. We were both breathing hard as he laid me down, he looked at me while his hands went to my panties, I gave him a nod. "Please" I needed him, it's never felt even a fraction like this. He pulled them down and threw them as his other hand rubs my upper thigh. "Fuck Feral." He said while grabbing said thigh, his eyes were dark. I just watched him, I was breathing hard and could snap at any moment. It was like I was drunk but in a different way. He takes his hand over my neatly

trimmed hair to rubbed me up and down, spreading me. I put an arm over my eyes and layed back down on the bed while moaning, fire. I heard a wrapper, which I assume is a condom. Not disappointed as I didn't need foreplay, I was so fucking wet for him, he told me as much in a deep voice. I felt something push into me but it wasn't him, after a few strokes I look down curious. He put one of my Chupa Chups in me, the lollipop rubbing against my walls. He looked at me as he kept going in and out slowly, "Fuck Hop, so good" I watched him. He pulled it out and gave it to me, I took it licking, strawberry. As I was about to give it back, I felt him lick me up all the way swirled his tongue around my clit, I moaned. Too much, his tongue working me over. One of his fingers found way inside me, while his other hand palmed my breast, I held my hand over his squirming. As he hummed low I came. My hips lifted a alittle, but he kept them down, I cried out loudly, I couldn't help it even if I tired. My legs shaking slightly, I felt my skin heat up a few degrees. Hop came up kissing me on my jaw before making his way to my mouth, I could still taste the strawberry mixed with us.

I grabbed the band of his sweat pants trying to get them off, he came up on his knees helping me. I looked down blushing as he got the last leg out, he was definitely proportionate I bit my lip. I looked back up to his cocky smirk, I pulled him down to me whispering, "Beautiful." Kiss "Caring." Kiss "Sweet" As I rubbed him up and down with my grip, deepening the kiss. He moaned into my mouth then growled, "I need to be inside you." He stopped my hand. As he leaned over I could feel him against me, giving me a zap of pleasure. He reached for a condom out of his side table, watching me while rolling it on. Goddamn Hop, those eyes I thought as he came back down closer to me, "Feral." It sounded like a prayer. He positioned himself over me, and kissed me as he sunk in. We both moaned, it was a delicious stretch. I broke the kiss needing to breath, he put his forehead against mine as he started to move inside me. I held his neck, "Hopper." I moaned my own prayer. His body felt so good against mine, strong and protective.

On a particularly hard thrust, I hissed grabbing his back with my fingers. "You take me so good." he growled in my ear. I moaned, "Jesus that mouth Hop." He picked up pace, every thrust electric. My nipples scrapped against his chest every time, making my toes curl. His finger came back down to my clit rubbing, "I need to feel you cum all on me Feral" He said with authority, I barely got "Fuck" out

before I started to cum for the second time. I clenched down hard on him, he gave a couple more jerky thrusts deep in me, hitting a spot perfectly, then I feel warmth in the condom. He moaned low in my ear, palming my jaw, then kissing the side of my lips. I came down swiping his lip with my tongue quickly giving him a small laugh. He smiled back and kissed me. I closed my eyes and let the sensations run through my body, I couldn't move. He pulled out sadly, and moved, so he was facing me, pulling me closer, so we were touching everywhere. I was so sleepy, drunk on feelings. I feel Hop kiss my head, as I drifted off. Sometime during the night I hear a giggling Alexei and Herrin trying to shoosh him as Hop grabbed my hip, thumb rubbing.

Friday

It was early afternoon as we all sat around the low table, Hop and I were on the couch drinking coffee. He called in to work, letting me know he had tons of time saved up, and they could handle one day without him...hopefully. All of our evidence laid out, "So what about the sample you guys collected?" I put my cup down, "Yea Terry said he couldn't process the DNA, he wanted to send it to the college but I don't think it's a good idea." I frowned, the back of my neck zapping. I looked to Herrin, "I mean we have enough for a good story already, plus we could set up those trail cameras we got. This would be the perfect case to try them out on." Before he could respond, "Trail cameras?" Hop asked, I explained while looking for a Chup in my bag, "Cameras that will snap a photo when a line is tripped, my friend is a professor at a college in Missouri, it's a prototype he threw our way." I found one, and was about to unwrap it when I seen Hop look like the-cat-that-caught-the-canary smile he had. Blushing I just put it back in my bag clearing my throat, the other two didn't seem to notice. Herrin translated for Alexei, "So simple." he was impressed. "That's awesome." Hop looked about the same as Alexei.

"Which is why I think this would be perfect." Herrin nodded, "I agree, and we have two, so how about the place by the house Alexei stayed, and by the lab in the woods?" I clicked my tongue, "Good idea." The items we needed were already in the car, I grab one camera and split up with Hop. "See you guys back here." I waved to them. It was nice, the sun was shining and it was about 60 degrees. It was perfect. As I was looking at the trees we pass, Hop engulfed my

hand with his big one. I gave him a smile, and scoot closer to him. "What's on your mind Hop?" I asked him, he wore a smile but it didn't reach his eyes. "So I'm guessing your leaving soon." His thumb drummed the steering wheel. I squeezed his hand, "After we get these up." I ripped the band-aid off, no use in drawling it out. He squeezed back, and we were quiet the rest of the short drive.

We got out at the field, and crossed it to the woods, stopping where we found the prints further in. The wind picked up a bit, but it still felt comfortable. I was wearing a dress similar to the black one, except it was cream colored and had flowers on it. I also had on a flannel shirt that matched the green in my dress. As we were walking I couldn't help to notice Hops great jeaned ass, he was wearing a black long sleeved thermal shirt. He helped me set up the trip wire first, then I went to reach to set the camera up. I almost had it, just a bit higher I thought. I felt Hop come up behind me, his body pressing into mine. I felt a shiver go through me, and he slipped the camera from my hand wordlessly and strapped it to the tree. I hugged him as he closed the ratchet strap, I heard him take a breath in. His hands came down the side of my body, and he grabbed my hips and brought me closer if possible. I looked up to him and saw a sad smile, I brought my arms around his neck and brought him down for a kiss.

The kiss was claiming, I was powerless to stop it, not that I wanted to. He backs us up to the tree unbuttoning the top of my dress, he undid my nude front clasp bra. My nipples pebbled in the cooler air, he looked back up to my eyes as he started to palm my breasts. "So fucking gorgeous." He slammed back down on my lips. He let up and kissed his way down to my boobs, taking one in his mouth. My hands dug into his hair, moaning, "Hop" I whined, I'll admit it. One of his hands squeezing the back of my upper thigh and his other pulling us down on his lap. My dress rode up almost exposing me, I rubbed against his hard on. "Shirt" I grabbed the end of his, and he helped me get it off. I pushed him down as I pulled the top of the dress down that settled around my waist. He was rubbing my thighs as I looked at him, he looked like a pagan god on the forest floor. I looked down and unzipped his jeans. I pulled him out of his boxers, spreading my panties to the side, I rubbed him against my core, "Jesus Con." His eyes were zeroed in, dark with lust. When he looked back up to me, I slammed down, which made him start to sit up moaning. I put my hands back on his chest and pushed him down which made his skip a breath.

"My turn." I let him know as I started to ride him. The wind was making my hair blow, the sun would come through the trees lighting up parts of our skin. It felt magickal, and I was his goddess as he thrusts his hips back up into me. "Feral" He moaned, a warning and a promise. His cock rubbing against my walls, the friction pure electric. I was so close, he felt so good, "Hopper" I cried as I found the perfect spot, I couldn't stop the wave crash on me. Hooper grabbed my waist and turned us around as I moaned, and thrust into me hard and fast taking my orgasm to another level. "Fuck" He growled as he chased his, filling me. We were both breathing hard coming down, I needed his mouth as I slammed my lips on his. It slowed, and he hugged me to his body, keeping me warm. "Will you be back, can I visit you?" I barely hear him. Oh Hop, I kissed his neck, "Of course, I really like you Hop." I rubbed my nose along his chin. I feel him hug me tighter, "I really like you too Con." He voice was soft, it made my heart skip. After several minutes of kisses, we dressed each other both wearing a stupid grin. We walked back to the field and to his blazer, getting in. I was tucked under his arm, snuggling into him as we made our way back to his cabin.

The guys were already there, Herrin was talking to Terry on the phone letting him know we were coming back today, but we wouldn't be there until late. I packed up the items I had lying around, I was going to miss this cabin. I'll be back I reminded myself, still I was missing it already, and we haven't even left yet. The guys were saying their goodbyes, I write down my phone number and address on Hoppers notepad. Herrin and Alexei left to the car, I handed him the pad, "Here's for your little black notebook." I winked, he laughed, "Sure." He smiled, looking into me. We moved at the same time, kissing softly. I sighed as it came to an end, "Call me when you get home Feral, no matter what time." He pecked my cheek and rubbed my jaw with his hand. "Of course." I promised him. He walked me to the car, opening my door for me. "See you soon." He promised, we talked about getting together next weekend. I gave him a quick peck, "Soon Hop." His deep blue eyes searching mine, he gave me a smile and nod.

I closed the door as Herrin asked me, "Making plans?" I put my seat belt on, "Yup" I popped the p. He could tell how happy I was, my smile couldn't be erased. I waved at Hop and blew him a kiss. He gave me a laugh and put his hand on his heart like the sap he was. Next weekend I reminded myself, I grabbed a Chup. Blushing,

orange. We were back on the road, leaving Hawkins behind us. Alexei passes me a tape he picked out, not looking at it, I put it in. Somebody's Baby by Jackson Browne, "Really?!" I guffaw, the guys just laughed.

We got to Murrays, Alexei took to him immediately both acting like they knew each other forever. They were already going through Alexei's papers that he saved. Before leaving again, Murray took me aside, "So how's Jim" He said with a knowing smile, it was weird hearing his first name. "I'm guessing you already know we uh, became a thing?" I asked, Murray was protective I was his little cousin, but he wasn't a caveman. Though the only and last time he met one of my boyfriends, it didn't go so well. "My dear cousin, I know everything." I hummed and pursed my lips, he wasn't going to give up anything. He patted my back, "Jim is a good man, Con. I've known him for some years now, and he's always been reliable and respectful." I smiled, making me fall for Hop even more. "Thanks Murray." Him praising Hop made me happy. Sighing, I missed him. "Oh new love." He said half sarcastically. I flipped him off, he laughed and told me to have a safe ride, he'd call me in a couple of days to update me on Alexei.

I drop Herrin off at Terrys apartment, "I'll see you Monday." He was going to stay the weekend with him, I knew how he felt now. "See you then, have fun!" It was my turn to tease, he gave me a smile and waved me off. I parked the car in the alleyway, bringing in what I needed tonight. I would get the other stuff tomorrow, I was tired. I grabbed my bag and holster, thumb running on the leather. I locked it up and went in through the back door. I turned on a light to see my way, after I did I heard a noise from the front. What the hell, I peeked around the corner seeing someone by the front door. I was starting to get nervous when I heard, "Feral?" I put my stuff down, and went to open the door, smiling "Hopper what the hell are you doing here?" He looked damn good and smelled that way too, "I said I'll see you soon." His eyes were lit with mischief, I hopped up on him, his arms supporting me. I kissed him, "I'm so glad you're here." He rubbed a hand into my hair, "Me too, you want to show me your place?" I gave him a look, "Sure." I got off of him, grabbing his hand I led the way. We weren't going to leave my apartment for the whole weekend.

Notes for the Chapter:

Fun fact about the trail cams, that's how they came about in the early 80's. The Missouri Hiss* State University were looking to study deer, so they came up with this. *As a Kansan it's not only my right, but my civic duty to hiss after mention that state. I really hope ya'll enjoyed my story! Please if you have an constructive criticism let me know!